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Daily Report

Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-033
Friday
16 February 1996

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Daily Report
Near East & South Asia

FBIS-NES-96-033 *16 February 1996*

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Palestinian Affairs

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat—Israel Military Closure 'Flagrant Violation'

JN1602115496 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 1125 GMT 16 Feb 96

[Report by 'Adil al-Za'nun from Gaza; from the "Today's Events" program]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] President Yasir 'Arafat said the military siege imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is a flagrant violation of the agreements between the Palestinian and Israeli sides. The Israeli military siege, imposed on the Gaza Strip since last week, is continuing. On the pretext of the closure, the Israeli occupation authorities prevented Palestinian citizens in the Gaza Strip from heading for the al-Aqsa Mosque to perform the prayer of the last Friday in Ramadan. Citizens here expressed their extreme denunciation of the Israeli measures, which prevented them from performing the last Friday prayer in the holy month of Ramadan.

Palestinian workers in the Gaza Strip asked the Israeli Government to lift the military siege before the 'Id al-Fitr. They said the closure is ruining their business. The Palestinian economy is losing $6 million a day as a result of the siege.

President Yasir 'Arafat performed the last Friday prayer in Ramadan at the al-Falah Mosque in Hayy al-Rimal. The mosque preacher, Isma'il Bulbul, emphasized the need for the participation of all citizens in building this homeland. [passage omitted]

Palestinian Affairs: 'Arafat To Participate in Tripartite Summit

JN1602081196 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0700 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] President Yasir 'Arafat will participate in the Egyptian-Jordanian-Palestinian summit that will be held within the next few days. The summit will deal with the latest developments in the peace process, as well as Arab conditions.

President 'Arafat and President Mubarak discussed the summit over phone last night.

It should be noted that Jordan's King Husayn and the Egyptian president called for this summit during their Cairo talks yesterday.

Palestinian Affairs: 'Abd-Rabbuh Urges Action Against Israeli Moves

JN1502180996 Jericho Voice of Palestine in Arabic 0545 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Telephone interview with Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, Palestinian minister of culture, by Fathi al-Barqawi in the studio; place not given—live; from the "A New Day" news feature]

[FBIS Translated Text] [al-Barqawi] Hardly a day passes without the Israeli occupation authorities and the settlers attacking our land, excavating the soil, uprooting our trees, and threatening an increasing number of our people, the owners of this land. Today will witness a number of activities to protest this and we believe that the question should not stop at protests. We will address this question to Culture Minister Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, who is with us on the telephone line. Good morning, Abu-Bashshar [Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh].

['Abd-Rabbuh] Good morning.

[Al-Barqawi] Protests by themselves are necessary but will matters stand at this point?

['Abd-Rabbuh] No, protests should not be the only means. We are of the view that the [Palestinian] Authority apparatus and departments and the popular movements are all asked to play their role in confronting the stealing of the land and the settler expansionist schemes—both the current and planned ones. This is our first and central cause. All other issues are secondary issues compared with it. Frankly speaking, the Israelis want to decide the fate of Jerusalem not only by negotiations but by settlement, expansion, and grabbing of land. They want to decide the fate of the final solution not by negotiations but by a new kind of war. Just as they decided fates by wars in the past, now they are launching a new kind of war, a continuing war in this case; namely, the war of robbery, the war of grabbing land, expansion, and confiscation, using all methods and means of deception to realize this objective.

This is taking place in all Palestinian areas. They are dismembering the geography and security of the Palestinian areas. This happened a few days ago when they closed off Ramallah city. This is a very serious precedent. Similar things are taking place elsewhere. In Bethlehem, they want to stifle the city and close its entrance. It is regrettable that some of us fall a prey to these methods because of ignorance and lack of knowledge. They say this is Area B or Area C. This is not true. Even the agreement [not further specified] does not give them the right to do anything at the city's entrance. They have a security checkpoint. This is neither Area B nor Area C. This area is completely

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under Palestinian responsibility, including the Rachel Tomb area.

I would like to say something; we are asked to accept the challenge with all our resources and weight. It is clear that the Peres government and Labor Party are now trying to wage their election battle and want us to pay the price of their election victory at the expense of our rights, land, and our Jerusalem. This has always been their method. They want us to pay the cost. But this requires us, as an authority, to play a role. A role must also be played by the popular forces and movements. As an authority, we must highlight this issue on the widest possible level. This issue should have prompted us to go directly to the Security Council, to the Arab League, and even to call for an Arab summit. We remember that a few months ago, we expected a call for an Arab summit because of the Jerusalem land confiscation. The Israelis now not only want to confiscate Jerusalem areas, but to build new quarters like a cordon around Jerusalem and to confiscate and fragment Palestinian land in all areas.

[Al-Barqawi] But it seems that the Palestinian National Authority and the PLO have so far not seriously approached the Arab League or the security Council?

['Abd-Rabbuh] We must do this within the next few days. We place this issue at the top of our agenda and thoughts. Moreover, the popular movements should not confine their action to protests. Their protests should not be occasional, confined to activities on certain days. We must deal with this issue daily and with all our resources.

[Al-Barqawi] It seems that by attempting to separate the settlements geographically, Israel is virtually setting up bantustans in the Palestinian land to separate the Palestinian areas from one another and to link them economically to Israel.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Yes, they want to link the settlements to Israel and establish road networks that will eventually become main roads, while our roads will become bypass roads.

[Al-Barqawi] Thus reversing the situation?

['Abd-Rabbuh] Yes.

[Al-Barqawi] It seems to me that this strips the Palestinians of the components of their national independence.

['Abd-Rabbuh] This not only strips us of the components of independence, but also the requirements of life, economy, and all that is required to provide the minimum conditions of life in their homeland. This is in preparation for a new kind of deportation and transfer. I say that this policy by the Peres government is not less racist and brutal than the policies of the radical forces in Israel. Definitely, we must not be fooled by their statements or Peres' sweet words. This is an expansionist, settlement policy. I wonder, is there any difference between this policy and Sharon's policy? The basis of this policy is racist. Explicitly, it is an attempt to limit the Palestinian presence in Jerusalem and throughout the Palestinian territories and to prepare for terminating the Palestinian presence.

[Al-Barqawi] Has the National Authority contacted Israel in this regard?

['Abd-Rabbuh] Of course. Daily contacts and discussions are held with the Israelis on all these issues. Everywhere, they resort to the same methods. Now they want to fool our brothers in Bethlehem by saying that this is Area C. There is nothing of this sort at all in any of the agreements, even the second Taba agreement. Elsewhere, the Israeli authorities claim that they are only doing what they are told to do—and so on and so forth. They are pursuing the same known sly methods. Therefore, I say that from the northernmost part of the homeland—from Tulkarm, Shuwaykah, and Hablah, to Baytuniya, Jerusalem, and all the areas surrounding Jerusalem, and to Bethlehem, Halhul, Sa'ir, and all other areas—it is evident that there is a trend to expedite the policy of fragmentation and separation and to impose a system of cantons on the Palestinian people as the final solution. Whom are they trying to fool? Frankly speaking, while the final solution negotiations will start a few months from now, the Israelis are imposing the final solution on the ground the way they see it.

[Al-Barqawi] They are imposing the logic of force?

['Abd-Rabbuh] Yes.

[Al-Barqawi] Brother Yasir 'Abd-Rabbuh, thank you.

['Abd-Rabbuh] Thank you.

Palestinian Affairs: PNC—PFLP Requests Return of Habash, 11 Party Members

NC1502132896 Paris AFP in English 1312 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Gaza City, Gaza Strip, Feb 15 (AFP)—The hardline Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) has requested the return to the Palestinian territories of its leader, George Habash, Palestinian officials said Thursday [15 February].

"The PFLP has submitted a lists of all its members who have seats on the Palestinian National Council (PNC), including Dr George Habash, to return to the homeland," said Salim al-Za'nun, acting president of the PNC, the PLO parliament-in-exile. He told AFP 11 members of

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the PFLP who are not members of the parliament in exile had also asked to return.

The Damascus-based PFLP is strongly opposed to the autonomy agreements signed between Israel and Yasir 'Arafat's PLO. It is one of the three main factions in the PLO alongside 'Arafat's Fatah movement and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) of Nayif Hawatimah.

Israel has said it will permit all members of the PNC to return for a meeting to remove references to the destruction of the Jewish state from the PLO charter. Habash, 69, earlier said he would not accept the Israeli offer.

Under the terms of peace accords with Israel, 'Arafat, the first democratically elected Palestinian president, has pledged to change the charter, although opposition to such a move remains strong among PNC members.

Palestinian Affairs: PFLP's Habash Denies Intention To Return to Gaza

NC1502172796 Cairo MENA in ENGLISH 1710 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Damascus, Feb 15 (MENA)—George Habash, secretary general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP], has denied reports about his return to Gaza.

A press spokesman for the Front said today that Habash, who is based in Damascus, is still adopting the same stance on rejecting the Palestinian-Israeli peace agreements.

Palestinian Affairs: Habash—Strategic Goal To Establish Palestinian State

TA1602085896 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 16 Feb 96 p 6

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. George Habash, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine [PFLP], stated in an interview appearing today in KOL HA'EMEQ VEHAGALIL (a local newspaper owned by the Yedi'ot Tiqshoret network), that he is absolutely opposed to repealing clauses in the Palestinian Charter.

According to Habash, "no Palestinian leader, party, or authority has the right to abrogate clauses in the charter, because we do not want to block the way before future generations who are entitled to pursue the struggle to regain the stolen homeland."

Dr. Habash, who is currently based in Damascus, said that the PFLP does not object to summoning the Palestine National Council to discuss the abrogation of the clauses, but it has not yet made up its mind whether to attend it.

Referring to the permanent arrangement, he said: "Our plan for the permanent arrangement is our interim goal, which is the right to return in order to establish the independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital. This suits us today because of the balance of power in the world, because it is accepted by international public opinion, and it is a realistic plan that can be realized by the Palestinian people in the territories and abroad. Our strategic goal is to establish a democratic Palestinian state over the entire territory of Palestine, where the Jews will enjoy equal rights without any discrimination in terms of religion, gender, or nationality." Habash stressed that he will return to the territories "only with my brethren, who are now in exile."

He added that he has no objection to meeting Jewish personalities "who believe in the right of the Palestinian people to decide its fate and to establish its independent state and Jerusalem its capital." According to him, "I am not an extremist and I do not perceive the struggle with Israel as being based on hostility toward the Jews or Judaism, but as a struggle with the Zionist movement and ideology, an ideology hostile to the Palestinian people and other nations in the region."

Palestinian Affairs: PNC, Legislative Council Session Expected for 20 Apr

TA1602084596 Tel Aviv MA'ARIV in Hebrew 16 Feb 96 pp 1-2

[Report by Ben Kaspit, Golan Yosefon, and Yosi Levi]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Palestinian Authority Chairman Yasir 'Arafat will summon a special session of the Palestine National Council [PNC] and the elected legislative council and submit for their approval a new version of the Palestinian Charter, according to a report drafted by Israeli analysts in Jerusalem.

According to the report, 'Arafat will convene the special session on 20 April and will bring his full weight to bear in a bid to have such a resolution passed.

It has been learned that 'Arafat will present a new version, a kind of Palestinian "declaration of independence" that will not include any clauses regarding Israel's right to exist, but will assert the Palestinians' right to a state with Jerusalem as its capital.

The report further notes that 'Arafat plans to hold municipal elections in the territories in August. [passage omitted]

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Algeria

Algeria: Cabinet Discusses Wage Cuts, Judiciary

LD1502225096 Algiers Radio Algiers Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Announcer] As was expected, the prime minister's office today, Thursday, published a statement on the meeting of the council of ministers which was held yesterday. [passage omitted]

The council of ministers also discussed the situation of the judiciary sector following the minister's report on this matter. More details with Hasiba Saad:

[Saad] The report shows that the judiciary arena suffers from a disjunction between the goals undertaken and the means available to it. This sector also suffers from a number of difficulties such as shortage in specialization and human resources. [passage omitted]

The prime minister urged that this file be completed before the coming April.

[Announcer] The third file the council studied was that of social protection and training and the prevalent situation in this respect. [passage omitted]

The council discussed preparations for the supplementary financial law for 1996. The law will allow the government to deal with urgent matters, especially financing houses, employing youth, and implementing national solidarity policy, which were also the outlines included in Mr. Liamine Zeroual's election program. [passage omitted]

Within this context comes the need for the preparation of the supplementary financial law for 1996, which the government intends to present to the council of ministers before the Transitional National Council meeting in April. The council of ministers also studied the issue of gradual cuts of workers' wages and chose one of three options. We return to Hasiba Saad:

[Saad] The prime minister noted that when the government resorted to the cuts measure it was very well aware that it had opted for an unpopular step. In taking this measure, the government chose one of three possible options. The first one was to ignore the [word indistinct] problem, which would affect over a million persons by not paying the wages of about 200,000 workers. The second one was to opt for easy solutions in which the government could have avoided the rage of workers but to the detriment of the genuine national economic interest. The third option was not to run away from a difficult reality; hence this measure stems from a responsible commitment to save the country from social and economic disturbances that might be very difficult.

The government's statement pointed out that the measure of cutting wages remains an exceptional one dictated by a real and serious situation which is inescapable. Instead of criticism, the measure calls for tangible and realistic counter-proposals — particularly faraway from escaping unavoidable realities. [passage omitted]

Algeria: UGTA Leader—Government Should Hold Talks or Resign

LD1502183996 Paris Radio France International in French 1230 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] In Algeria, after two days of general strike called by the UGTA [General Union of Algerian Workers] trade union movement, its secretary general stated today that the government should either henceforth hold talks on all political, economic, and social issues or stand down. According to him, the strike has been supported by 96 percent of public sector workers.

Egypt

Egypt: King Husayn Arrives for Talks With Mubarak

NC1502142996 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1350 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 15 Feb (MENA)—King Husayn of Jordan arrived in Cairo this afternoon on a brief visit to Egypt for talks with President Husni Mubarak, who received him upon arrival at Cairo Airport.

Egypt: Mubarak, Jordan's Husayn Hold News Conference

NC1502214996 Cairo ESC Television in Arabic 1750 GMT 15 Feb 96

[News Conference by Egyptian President Husni Mubarak and Jordanian King Husayn with unidentified correspondents at the Presidential Palace in Heliopolis, Cairo, on 15 February—recorded]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Mubarak] In the name of God, the compassionate, the merciful. I wish you well on today's religious occasion [anniversary of the revelation of the Koran]. I welcome my brother His Majesty King Husayn as a brother and a friend. We have worked together for a long time—ever since the early 1970's—and have grown accustomed to meeting occasionally whenever there are any events or problems worthy of discussion. Today we discussed the Iraqi people's situation, the Libyan issue, and the dispute between Eritrea and Yemen over the islands. We also

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viewed Arab cooperation, ways of settling inter-Arab disagreements, and issues of mutual concern to Egypt and Jordan.

We paid special attention to the Palestinian issue during our talks and decided that the Palestinian issue needs to be supported at this time when the Palestinians are implementing the signed agreements. Actually I have talked with my brother His Majesty the King about holding a summit conference between him, myself, and President Yasir 'Arafat. Therefore I am calling for this meeting to examine what the permanent status of the Palestinian issue should be and how we can bolster the Palestinian process until its conclusion. Thank you.

[Husayn] Dear Brother, Sir, I thank you because you have again given me an opportunity to meet with you personally in this blessed month on the land of Egypt, which is so dear to us. My good wishes to you, to the Egyptian people, and the Arab, Islamic nation. I also thank you for giving us the opportunity to discuss all the issues, beginning with our bilateral relations, which are exemplary, thank God. I believe that the next meeting of our higher joint committee will take place soon, God willing. It is a source of pleasure for us that this meeting will, God willing, be held in Amman. Everyone in Jordan is willing to do everything possible to promote our coordination and our pursuit of integration in the economic sphere and in all other spheres as well.

Naturally, Your Excellency, we have had the opportunity to discuss the issues you have been so kind to mention, notably the Palestinian issue. You have referred to our united stance in support of our brothers and kinsfolk until they attain their rights on their national soil and of encouraging the continued search for a just and honorable peace in the context of a comprehensive peace settlement in this region, God willing.

We in Egypt and Jordan have a duty to our Palestinian brothers. It is necessary for us to hold a meeting with Brother President Yasir 'Arafat soon so we can discuss with him all the things that can encourage progress and support our brothers and kinsfolk in their progress toward a promising and beneficial future, God willing, with regard to the attainment of their rights on their national soil.

Regarding the Iraqi people, we have a single-minded interest in their destiny and future, in maintaining their unity, and in defending their sovereignty and territorial integrity. I hope they will overcome this situation as soon as possible and enjoy their right to a free and dignified life on their national soil. We support this people with all our resources and capabilities. We hope they will soon get rid of their sufferings.

Regarding action on the pan-Arab level, we hope we will achieve new successes in the future. We appreciate Brother President Mubarak's role and his constant efforts to marshal the ranks and remove existing differences and problems. I take this opportunity to affirm to him that we support him with all our resources and capabilities in this sphere. We are full of faith, determination, and resolve. This is a hope in my heart and the hearts of all Jordanians—government and people.

Mr. President, again I express my great thanks and gratitude to you. God willing, as we approach the holiday ['Id-al-Fitr], we will advance on the path of integration, cooperation, and solidarity as brothers, friends, and comrades in the long march. We will pursue the course of frankness, clarity, and consultation. Thank God, there are no big problems at this time, Sir; there are hopes and aspirations. There is determination to pursue the course that will turn these hopes and aspirations into a reality in the life of our nation. Thank you, sir.

[Correspondent] Mr. Mubarak, Your Majesty King Husayn: You mentioned that a tripartite summit will be held with President 'Arafat. When will this summit be held and is any idea of holding a larger summit for consultations on the Jerusalem issue, particularly with the approach of the final-status talks? This is one question. The other question is about the economic summit scheduled to be held in Cairo. Is there inter-Arab coordination in preparation for this summit? Thank you.

[Mubarak] In fact, the summit between President 'Arafat, His Majesty King Husayn, and myself is designed to support the Palestinians' progress, because the Palestinian issue has not reached an end yet. Therefore, it is necessary to support it until we achieve a final solution of the issue and the Middle East problem comes to an end.

Regarding the economic conference, it will be held in September. We are all working for it. We are trying to cooperate as much as possible with the other Arab countries to find a good approach with which we will begin the economic conference.

[Husayn] My answer is the same as President Mubarak's.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency, Mr. President, I hope you will answer the following two questions: The first is about your efforts to contain and resolve the crisis between fraternal Yemen and Eritrea over the islands. How far have you gone? Has fruitful progress been made? The second question is: Jordanian diplomacy has managed to break the ice in relations between Jordan and some fraternal countries that had deteriorated as a result of misunderstandings over Jordan's position on

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the Gulf crisis. Does Your Excellency believe that the time has come for things to get back on track and for the march of common Arab action to move forward again? Thank you.

[Mubarak] As regards Eritrea and Yemen, we have made many contacts and sent envoys to the presidents of the two countries. Three weeks ago, I met Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih in Paris during the funeral of the late French president. We discussed the issue and he asked if a meeting between him and the Eritrean president could be held in Cairo. After I returned from Saudi Arabia on Tuesday [13 February], I contacted the Eritrean president and he agreed to a meeting. But I found some problems when I later contacted the Yemeni president; namely, that a type of document must be agreed upon before the meeting takes place.

As a matter of fact, I was calling for a meeting without preconditions. We do not think the meeting will solve the problem, but a meeting between the two presidents, an exchange of views between them, and an attempt by each side to understand the position of the other may help prepare the climate for experts to find a solution. The issue is still pending; we are awaiting some responses, but I understand that both sides want a peaceful solution to this problem without bloodshed and without further complications. Neither country wants to spend its revenues on weapons and fighting and to forget its people.

As for Arab reconciliation, His majesty King Husayn was in Saudi Arabia last Sunday. I believe this was a good initiative. As my brother his majesty told me, the meeting was excellent and all matters were discussed frankly. As for the other Arab states, I believe the time has come for us to close ranks and return to what we were before or even better than before. International circumstances make this inevitable. His Majesty Sultan Qabus supports this; Shaykh Zayid Bin-Sultan Al Nuhayyan [of the UAE] has repeatedly called for it. This is also the position of Bahrain and Kuwait. I believe that Kuwait's position is better than ever before. I think the air is clear enough for us to continue to solve our differences and demonstrate genuine Arab solidarity.

International circumstances do not permit such Arab divisions. Consider the Arab common market, for example. It started in the 1940's. The European Common Market was established years later. But while the latter worked, the Arab common market achieved nothing. We hope that the whole Arab nation will focus on all these issues to serve the interests of our peoples and nation. Thank you.

[Correspondent] A question to King Husayn. How would you describe Jordanian-Israeli relations and Jordanian-Iraqi relations at present? Thank you.

[Husayn] Before answering this question, allow me to comment, if I may, on the issue of Yemen and Eritrea. I am certain that as long as the brother president is undertaking these blessed endeavors, the result will be good, God willing. We back him both in his general approach and in his view on the need for a meeting between the two presidents, God willing, as soon as possible to discuss this problem with its various dimensions and, consequently, reach the result to which we all aspire—a peaceful and fraternal solution to this problem as soon as possible. We bless and support these efforts to the best of our ability and resources.

Regarding your question, Jordanian-Israeli relations are normal. We are in a state of peace. We have reached a full and comprehensive agreement on all the points on the agenda of the negotiations. The peace process has been constitutionally endorsed and is finalized. Now we are talking about this new era and what it could offer so that the people in the entire region can feel the difference between how our relations used to be and what they are now with the new situation and the new opportunities made available to our men and women so they can build, develop, and achieve their aspirations, ambitions, and goals. In this they will be armed with science and with confidence in their right to lead a free and dignified life on their national soil.

As for the broader picture, we hope that the progress toward a comprehensive solution and peace in this region will serve all the region's peoples.

As for our relations with Iraq, once again I emphasize that our concern has always been for the Iraqi people, their unity, their cohesion, and their ability to get through these difficult times. We have done this by demanding and insisting on Iraq's sovereignty over all its territory. We have stated this at every opportunity and at every level. We hold to this line and do not run away from our responsibilities to this fraternal people, who deserve better circumstances than they have.

[Mubarak] We will take a question from here and then from there. Yes please.

[Correspondent] Mr. President: You mentioned the Iraq issue and ending the suffering of the Iraqi people. Could we say that there is harmony of views between the two countries about how to end the suffering of the Iraqi people, and is this related to the implementation of Security Council 986 or do you mean changing the Iraqi situation from inside? Thank you.

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[Mubarak] Changing the Iraqi situation is something that concerns the Iraqi people. We cannot speak about or work toward intervention in the domestic affairs of any country. As for backing the Iraqi people, we are working and we agree with His Majesty King Husayn in this regard. We are doing our best to find a way to ease the bad situation and the suffering experienced by the Iraqi people. Toward that end, the Iraqi administration must comply with the Security Council resolutions. Without this, it will be hard for us to advance in this regard.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency, as the president of the largest Arab country, do you have a plan to revive the Arab order?

[Mubarak] A plan to what?

[Correspondent] In other words, a plan to invigorate the Arab League, an institution which Egypt worked to get to return to Cairo, but which has actually been kept in cold storage so far?

[Mubarak] Brother, as you know, we always speak of the Arab League as the home of all the Arabs. There have been rumors, remarks, some actions, or talk about setting the Arab League aside and establishing a new body to replace it. There is no need now to give the details of the things said about this issue. We are determined that the Arab League remain the home of all the Arabs. Founded in 1944, it is the most long lived and established organization. It cannot be disregarded or closed down. Indeed, all of us must invigorate the Arab League in coordination with our brothers in all the Arab countries.

A second point is this: With regard to the Arab order, we must really speak of an Arab reconciliation, a closing of Arab ranks. We have been working toward this goal for several years. As you know, after the Iraq-Kuwait issue, the wound was very deep. It was like throwing someone out of his own home and humiliating his family. It is not easy just to press a button and make Arab reconciliation take place overnight. We are making a lot of efforts and I believe that there has been a lot of progress in this area. Many countries are speaking of Arab reconciliation. Many countries are saying: Let us forget the past and look to the future. Current circumstances make it necessary for us to set our differences aside and work for the benefit of our nation's future as we approach the 21st century.

In the world there are many blocs of nations and every bloc is seeking to benefit itself. We must therefore pay heed to our own interests. We are a nation that is capable of cooperation and serving its people.

[Correspondent] This is a question for His Majesty King Husayn and his excellency the president. Have you discussed ways of boosting Egyptian-Jordanian relations? In what fields will there be Egyptian-Jordanian cooperation?

[Mubarak] Let his majesty the king answer, then.

[Husayn] Thank you, Mr. President. Regarding bilateral relations, I believe they are exemplary and warm. We are pursuing a path of progress in all fields. As you know, regular meetings are held between the heads of our governments and among the ministers concerned with every field of endeavor. We hope to make bigger strides in the future to fulfill many of our hopes and forge greater cooperation and integration between our two countries. Thank God, the situation is satisfactory and we expect further cooperation and integration. Thank God, the situation is satisfactory and there will be more and more meetings.

I have, Sir, an observation to make concerning what is described as the Arab order. There is no such thing as an Arab order.

[Mubarak] By the way, I merely overlooked the reference to the term—an Arab order. [Mubarak and Husayn laugh]

[Husayn] What exists is the goal of Arab integration and cooperation based on mutual respect. Regarding Egypt, as you have been so kind to point out, it is true that it is really the Arab's big sister. I have believed this all my life; I think I have demonstrated it by seeking to enable Egypt to play its role within the Arab nation that it has always served so well.

As his excellency the president has been so kind to point out, the Arab League is the most longstanding and venerable organization in the world. The fault is not in the Arab League and the answer is not to replace it with another body. What is needed is for everyone to have sufficient conviction and resolve to work with each other, build, keep our word, lay foundations, and continue to work together, proceeding from our conviction that we are one nation and that we must seek to provide a dignified life for future generations in the Greater Arab homeland.

[Correspondent] My question is addressed to his excellency the president. You have been following the developments of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations. How far have these negotiations gone? Are you now trying to build an Arab position supportive of the Syrian stance, especially now that the date of the Israeli elections has been brought forward?

[Mubarak] We know the details and the developments of the Syrian-Israeli negotiations. But it is not our business to discuss this here; the brothers in Syria or

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Israel can be asked about that. Regarding support for these negotiations, we always support Arab rights. We say that in any peace with any Arab country, in any peace with Syria, Syria's sovereignty must be respected and the entire territory occupied in June 1967 must be restored. When there is need for any kind of support from us, we will never be reluctant to support this right.

[Correspondent] My question is directed to both his majesty the king and his excellency the president. How can the embargo against Libya be removed?

[Mubarak] You want his majesty the king to answer this? [laughter]. We are doing our best in this regard. We made tremendous efforts and managed to avoid an escalation. But there still is a need for great efforts to solve the problem. We all want the embargo against Libya to end. No Arab country wants the Libyan people or leadership to suffer, but even more efforts are needed in many areas. We are trying to find a solution in cooperation with our brothers in Libya and with any other brother who wants to help in this regard, but this will take time.

[Correspondent] My question is for His Majesty King Husayn. In a recent statement, you said that the Arab nation is at the threshold of a new stage. What are the features of this stage? My other question is about the completion of the peace process. How do you view this process now? Is it moving positively? Do you think the issue of Jerusalem will hinder it?

[Husayn] Regarding the next stage for the Arabs, I believe that we are on the threshold of a new era, God willing, where we will learn from our past experiences and avoid all the mistakes of the past. I believe there is a common desire to achieve integration and cooperation so that our nation can occupy the place it deserves in this world, so that each one of us can live comfortably and with a clear conscience, and so that the Arab people can rest and find opportunities to realize their future ambitions and objectives. God willing, this will be achieved within the framework of peace in this region. We hope that this peace will be full and comprehensive, based on right and justice. I believe that if there are sincere intentions to reach the hoped-for solution to any issue and problem, then no problem will ever be impossible to solve.

[Correspondent] Your Majesty, Mr. President: There is a talk in the region about a wave of terrorism. Do you believe the region is suffering from terrorism? If so, did you discuss with his majesty a mechanism to confront this onslaught? The other question: Can we say that 1996 will witness an Arab summit conference after these bilateral meetings?

[Mubarak] Are the questions addressed to me or to his majesty?

[Husayn] Terrorism? [Mubarak laughs] I believe I speak on behalf of myself and on behalf of Mr. President.

[Mubarak] I will speak about terrorism and his majesty the king will answer the second question.

[Husayn] Okay, so be it.

[Mubarak] First of all, terrorism is a worldwide phenomenon, not an Arab phenomenon. Blaming the Islamic religion is not necessary at all, because terrorism is not Islamic. The Islamic religion preaches amity, cooperation, and loyalty. There are forces that have broken away from the Islamic religion. I believe such kinds of violence have occurred in several other religions and countries. This requires international cooperation, not just Arab cooperation. The Arab countries are cooperating in combating terrorism, but there is a need for international cooperation because terrroism is a universal phenomenon that expresses itself in America, Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Arab world.

[Husayn] Correct.

[Mubarak] As for an Arab summit, I hope from the bottom of my heart that we will meet, if possible even next month, but this takes time. I hope we will meet this year.

[Husayn] God willing, Mr. President. In any case, regarding terrorism, terrorism is alien to our religion, our tolerant creed, and all our beliefs. Therefore, we strongly oppose it with all our resources and capabilities. I denounce it, especially when it targets innocent people and frightens them here and there. We denounce all its forms and patterns.

In defense of our religion and creed it is our duty to confront all these attempts to distort the image of Islam and the morals and customs of the Arabs that we have inherited from their fathers and grandfathers. It is our duty to defend our religion and creed against all attempts to distort them through these practices, which are not connected to religion either directly or indirectly and which target all the people.

Moreover, I also share the president's feelings that these groups are opportunistic, that their aims are known, and that they are not confined to this region. These groups had suspicious affiliations in the past, as they have now. Each Arab should think about these groups, discuss their backgrounds and their conditions as a whole. Inevitably, they are not working in the interests of the Arab nation or people in any way. Therefore, we support any cooperation against terrorism. Unquestionably, we

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are against terrorism. We support our brothers and cooperate in defending human life and values and our religion and creed against all enemies and all their plans.

[Correspondent] Your Excellency, at the Amman economic summit, a package of joint economic projects among Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, and Israel was proposed. One of these projects was a free trade zone between Egypt and Jordan. How far have discussions into these projects gone? The second question is this: It is noted that the international media are now trying to create a crisis about Sudan, giving the impression that the Arab nation will suffer as a result of Sudan's domestic situation and the sinful attempt on the life of Your Excellency and its repercussions. How do you view this media phenomenon and its real political character?

[Mubarak] Which newspaper do you represent?

[Correspondent] The Jordanian newspaper AL-ASWAQ.

[Mubarak] The crisis is being created not by the Western media but by the Sudanese leadership. When it hides killers and shelters terrorists, should I accuse the media or the ones who really shelter terrorists of promoting this? I think it is only logical and reasonable to say that those who shelter terrorists are the ones to blame. Media only tell the world about it. This is the problem with a government that is sheltering and helping terrorists. We possess exclusive evidence of this; and statements given by suspects to the prosecution and to the court prove that most of what is taking place comes from and originates in Sudan. So this is not a media problem. If you possess incorrect information, I will tell you what we know. We read media just as you do.

Regarding a free trade zone between Egypt and Jordan, there is no problem. The two governments will meet soon, and we and Jordan have no problem creating a free trade zone.

[Correspondent, in English] This is a question for His Majesty King Husayn of Jordan from Nile Television International. Your Majesty, the Jordanian-Israeli peace accord has often been described by Israeli officials as a warm peace. Now that Shim'on Peres has called for early elections and there is a big chance for the Likud Party in these elections, with Binyamin Netanyahu as party leader, do you anticipate any change in the Israeli-Jordanian relations [words indistinct].

[Interpreter] The Jordanian monarch replied: The election is an internal Israeli matter. The call for the holding the elections will positively reflect on efforts to prepare for the next stage of talks, which seek a comprehensive peace in the region. As regards the relations and describing them as warm, this comes as a result of the two sides' willingness to have normal relations and the willingness of our peoples to benefit from the warmth of the peace process.

[Husayn, in English] And from the change in our life, from the uncertainty that we lived with throughout all the [words indistinct] on both sides, to look at what is possible to create a living example, something new hopefully in this entire region. As far as the Jordanian-Israeli peace treaty is concerned, I think that it was approved by the overwhelming majority of Israelis on their side, so there is no problem there, either.

[Correspondent, in English with superimposed Arabic translation] Your Excellency, Your Majesty, following this meeting can we say that you see eye to eye on what measures should be taken to help the Iraqi people?

[Husayn, in English with superimposed Arabic translation] All our steps in this regard are clear. We are definitely concerned about the Iraqi people's plight. We are doing our best to help them. Any measures must originate from the Iraqis themselves. As far as I am concerned, I have tried my best. I will continue to do my best to gather the Iraqis together to deal with the circumstances spawned in Iraq in recent years. I affirm the unity of the Iraqi territory and people until Iraq transcends its current ordeal.

[Mubarak, in English with superimposed Arabic translation] I cannot add anything more.

Egypt: Jordan's King Husayn Departs Cairo After Brief Visit

NC1502184596 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1830 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 15 Feb (MENA)—King Husayn of Jordan left Cairo this evening after a few hours' visit to Egypt. He was seen off at the airport by President Husni Mubarak.

Egypt: 'Militants' Kill 3 in Southern Village

NC1502134496 Paris AFP in English 1117 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Al-Minya, Egypt, Feb 15 (AFP)—Islamic militants sprayed a village market in southern Egypt with gunfire on Thursday [15 February], killing three people on the spot, police said.

The fundamentalist gunmen shot dead two village guards at the market in Hawt in al-Minya province and a 67-year-old man who was standing nearby. They then grabbed the guards' rifles and fled, watched by horror-struck villagers. Police said the militants were from Egypt's biggest outlawed fundamentalist organisation

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the al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah (Islamic Group). Several people were injured in the panic which followed the attack as villagers tried to flee the market.

The shooting brought to 958 the number of people killed since Muslim militants launched a campaign of violence to try to overthrow the government in March 1992. Many of the attacks have taken place in al-Minya, an al-Jama'ah stronghold.

Egypt: Writer Criticizes U.S.-Jordan Bid To 'Topple' Iraqi Regime

NC1502125896 Cairo AL-AHRAM in Arabic 12 Feb 96 p 10

[Article by Salamah Ahmad Salamah; from the "Closeup" column: "Perry's Statement"]

[FBIS Translated Text] U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry has disclosed that the United States and Jordan are making joint efforts to overthrow the Iraqi regime. He said that these efforts are not confined to Jordan alone, but also include other Gulf countries which he did not name. Also, he did not reveal the nature of these efforts and plots.

The U.S. stance on Iraq is not new. President George Bush could have given orders to the U.S. forces to continue their march on Baghdad and dispatch the Iraqi regime at its roots in the final days of the Gulf war. However, President Bush heeded President Husni Mubarak's advice. President Mubarak opposed foreign U.S. intervention to change the Iraqi regime by force, because such an action would have constituted a serious precedent that would allow any foreign force to interfere in the domestic affairs of the Arab countries and to change their regimes by force.

Should the United States give itself the right to do this once, Israel might give itself the right to do it again in another country. Thus, Arab sovereignty could be exposed to blatant violation and usurpation by any power possessing military and political might, particularly because there are many causes for dispute between several Arab countries themselves and their neighbors. There are border disputes between Arab countries and Iranian ambitions in Gulf islands. Also, there are differences between Turkey and Syria and between Egypt and Sudan. Should the door for intervention in internal affairs be opened for changing unfriendly regimes by force, matters would get out of hand in the region and the Arab world would lose everything, even the appearance of cohesion within the framework of the Arab League.

Ever since signs loomed in the horizon indicating the possibility of Jordan's launching an initiative to change the Iraqi regime by embracing the opposition forces and proposing plans for establishing a federal regime carrying the seeds of partitioning Iraq into three regions; and ever since reports appeared on preparations for establishing new alliances with the participation of the United States and Israel, and revival of the Hashemite ambitions in Iraq, Washington has reemphasized its assertions that it is working to topple Saddam's regime and to invigorate the policy of "dual containment" it is pursuing against Iran and Iraq.

It is not in the interest of Jordan to get involved in schemes to impose change in Iraq by force. Also, this is not in the interest of all other Arab parties in the Gulf and elsewhere. This is because destroying Arab legitimacy regarding Iraq could lead to destroying Arab legitimacy in other Arab countries, foremost of which is Jordan itself, if not today, tomorrow. This is where the danger lies in the U.S. attempts. Let the Iraqis change their regime by themselves if they wish to. But foreign intervention with U.S or Israeli help would be an utter folly.

Sudan

Sudan: al-Bashir Pledges Cooperation With OAU on Egyptian Issue

EA1502213096 Omdurman Republic of Sudan Radio Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Staff Lieutenant General 'Umar al-Bashir, the president of the Republic, met the OAU delegation headed by Ambassador Daniel Antonio, at his office at the General Command today. During the meeting, the government's current efforts to track down those suspected in the assassination attempt against the Egyptian president, were discussed. Al-Bashir stressed that Sudan is committed to the unity and cohesion of the OAU to enable it to perform its role of resolving problems within an African framework. He pointed out that Sudan will do its utmost to cooperate with the OAU on the issue.

Sudan: Minister on UNSC Resolution, Other Issues

MM1502154696 London AL-QUDS AL-'ARABI in Arabic 14 Feb 96 p 4

[Interview with Sudanese Information Minister 'Abd-al-Basit Sabdarat by Kamal Bakhit in Khartoum; date not given]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Bakhit] What are your views on the recent [UN] Security Council [UNSC] resolution concerning the Egyptian suspects involved in the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Husni Mubarak?

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[Sabdarat] First, we consider that it is a dangerous resolution definitely targeting Sudan and aimed at dragging it in front of the UNSC, and especially that the UNSC has recently become a potential guillotine and a place for intimidation. Although the resolution did not carry a clear condemnation, it can be seen between the lines.

The UNSC resolution may be based on the resolution of the African Mechanism for Solving Disputes. At the same time, however, it adds to what the mechanism says, because the mechanism only mentions pursuing and finding the suspects. The UNSC resolution mentions this mechanism, but goes beyond what the mechanism says, saying that the suspects must be handed over, as if these suspects are in Sudan and have been found.

Naturally, the resolution is intended to put pressure on Sudan to relinquish its plans and orientations. Consequently, we view it with concern, but also with confidence, because we are not isolated from the world.

In fact, the resolution was supported by China, Chile, Honduras, Guinea-Bissau, and Russia on the premise that it would refer the matter to the Mechanism for Solving Disputes.

[Bakhit] How will Sudan react to this resolution?

[Sabdarat] We will work with Ethiopia toward uncovering clear evidence to discover the wanted suspects. We shall make every effort to show the world that we have done exactly what is required.

[Bakhit] What do you think will happen after the 60-day reprieve set by the UNSC?

[Sabdarat] We do not want to preempt events, but taking this issue to the UNSC will cause it to snowball day after day.

[Bakhit] Do you think that the wanted suspects actually entered Sudan, or is this an Ethiopian theory based on the fact that Ethiopia is Sudan's neighbor?

[Sabdarat] First, only one confirmed suspect entered Sudan, an Egyptian citizen who entered Sudan on the day of the incident, but we were only told about him one month after his arrival in Sudan. The other suspects apparently fled to Sudan directly after the incident. However, Sudan has vast borders. The Sudanese-Ethiopian borders are 1,360 km long, and the suspects could have fled across these long borders or across those with Egypt or anywhere else.

Thousands of camels and hundreds of tons of produce, to say nothing of p.. ple, escape from Sudan across the borders, and we cannot apprehend them.

[Bakhit] At first, Ethiopia denied any Sudanese involvement in this incident. How do you explain the change in the Ethiopian position and the fact that it is accusing Sudan?

[Sabdarat] The brothers in Ethiopia have told us that they face enormous pressures. You know that Ethiopia needs a great deal of assistance, and this assistance does not come free. It is now clear that Ethiopia is conforming to the remarks of U.S. [National] Security Adviser Anthony Lake, who said that he would incite Sudan's neighbors against it; consequently, what happened was the result of enormous pressures on Ethiopia.

[Bakhit] Do you think that, after the 60-day reprieve, there will be sanctions against you, especially in view of the fact that Madeleine Albright, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said at the close of the UNSC session that Sudan can run but cannot hide?

[Sabdarat] I do not wish to talk about these predictions, but I would say that if it is a matter of imposing sanctions against a people to bring it to its knees and make it surrender, then I believe that they would achieve exactly the opposite.

[Bakhit] Has the Egyptian regime severed the last link with you after making its complaint against Sudan to the UNSC?

[Sabdarat] No one can sever the last link. The brothers in Egypt want to sever this link, and are even trying to do so. We believe that this is neither in Sudan's nor Egypt's interest. We believe that Egypt cannot hold the UNSC Arab seat and add another Arab and Muslim state to the list of tribulations of the UNSC and the international community.

[Bakhit] In your view, What are the reasons for the U.S. diplomatic mission's recall from Khartoum?

[Sabdarat] We believe that this was timed to coincide with the UNSC resolution and is mainly intended to emphasize that there are a number of terrorists in Sudan because the United States has included Sudan in the list of terrorist states since 1993. By recalling their diplomatic mission, I believe that they wanted, first, to dramatize the UNSC issue and, second, to confirm what they said previously and were unable to prove, regarding the presence of terrorists in Sudan. Third, we believe that this decision was hasty and not carefully thought out.

[Bakhit] Will the U.S. diplomatic mission's recall from Sudan affect relations between the two countries, especially in view of the fact that the United States has announced that it has not severed its relations with Sudan?

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[Sabdarat] We believe that the U.S. diplomatic mission's recall does not mean severing relations. However, if the United States wants to sever its relations with Sudan, the loser in this affair, as the British INDEPENDENT newspaper says, would be the United States.

[Bakhit] What is the military situation on the eastern border, after the Ethiopian attack, and did Sudanese opposition forces spearhead this attack?

[Sabdarat] The situation is fine, and there is no evidence of the opposition's involvement in this attack. It was purely an Ethiopian attack.

[Bakhit] What was the Ethiopian attack's objective?

[Sabdarat] First, these areas where the attack took place have long been disputed areas between Sudan and Ethiopia. Also, the Ethiopian regime believes that those who live there are not loyal to it but, instead, are groups which are entirely opposed to it and which pose a threat to it.

[Bakhit] Which were the areas that were actually invaded by the Ethiopian forces?

[Sabdarat] The areas inside Sudanese territory which were invaded were of course the area of Taya [name as transliterated]....The other areas are disputed areas and the subject of controversy between the two countries. The presence of Ethiopia in them is a violation of the agreement between the two countries.

[Bakhit] Have there been any contacts between you and Ethiopia to withdraw its forces and improve relations?

[Sabdarat] We will not hesitate to improve our relations and hold a dialogue with our neighbors. We believe that good relations can be restored if each country is made aware of the importance of these relations.

[Bakhit] Following the Ugandan attack in south Sudan, is the city of Juba still under the threat of a military attack?

[Sabdarat] First, Juba is not under any threat.... Security prevails in the south, and I have just read a BBC bulletin confirming that the Sudanese Army has recaptured Tonga. This confirms that we are regaining our territory. This does not mean that it is an easy matter, however, or that Sudan is not facing an external conspiracy.

[Bakhit] Have relations with Uganda improved, or are they still tense?

[Sabdarat] They have not improved yet, and are still somewhat tense.

[Bakhit] What about the mediation efforts between Sudan and Uganda recently announced by Libyan leader Colonel Mu'ammar al-Qadhdhafi?!!

[Sabdarat] Frankly, so far I have not seen their result. Maybe there are some behind-the-scene developments.

[Bakhit] How far are rebel forces from Juba?

[Sabdarat] Very, very far from Juba, and we are not at all worried.

[Bakhit] What are your views on the assassination of rebel leader William Nun in southern Sudan?

[Sabdarat] This confirms that this rebel movement will destroy itself.

[Bakhit] It is clear that you did not impose any conditions or special requirements on the presidential candidates. What is the intention of this?

[Sabdarat] Our intention is that this should not prevent people from putting forward their candidacy at the presidential elections. If it were left to me, I would have put restrictions to allow only those who really qualify.

[Bakhit] Many states view relations with Iran and Libya as relations concerned with camps and the financing of terrorism, while the citizen does not feel that there is any economic benefit in them in Sudan's current circumstances, at a time when it is struggling to obtain oil in exchange for hard currency. Why do Libya and Iran behave as spectators toward Sudan's economic crises?

[Sabdarat] I definitely have no answer to this question. Libya and Iran have the answer. However, I would like to say that Libya is also targeted because of its orientation, and Iran is also entirely targeted because of its orientation. Therefore, the issue is not about relations with Libya or Iran, but about a blow to international strategic relations.... A blow to Arabism.... A blow to Islam. Islam is targeted in Iran.... Arabism is not a terrorist state, neither is Libya a terrorist state, and neither is Sudan. However, they want to be in the same boat, and our relations are not based on financial interests. Our relations with Iran are relations between Muslims and people of one faith.... Our relations with Libya are relations involving unity and Arabism.... In fact, the financial link in reality is not the essential element.... We have learned not to hold our hand out constantly.... ([the ignorant man] thinks because of his modesty that he is free from want). [Koranic verse] [passage omitted]

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Bahrain

Bahrain: Riot Police 'Violently' Disperse Shiite Ceremonies

NC1602085996 Paris AFP in English 0806 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Nicosia, Feb 16 (AFP) — Anti-riot police in Bahrain used tear gas to break up crowds of Shiite Moslems who gathered for a night of prayers, residents said Friday [16 February].

The residents, contacted by phone from Nicosia, said police violently dispersed groups of Shiites in al-Mu'min Mosque in Manama and in the main Shiite mosque of Al-Qasab in the capital. No official confirmation was available.

Shiites had gathered to celebrate the Night of Destiny or Laylat al-Qadr in Arabic, which is the third night before the end of the holy month of Ramadan, when the Koran was first revealed to the prophet Mohammad.

Bahraini authorities ordered Shiite clerics not to make political sermons in mosques after a flare-up of unrest in December sparked by mainly Shiite opposition members calling for the restoration of parliament, suspended in 1975.

Meanwhile, dozens of slogans have been daubed on walls in Shiite Moslem areas calling on Bahrainis not to celebrate the al-Fitr feast which marks the end of Ramadan. Other slogans urged Shiites to "continue the fight." "We will not give up," and "we will never forget the prisoners and deportees," others said, according to the residents.

The exiled opposition group the Bahrain Liberation Front called Tuesday on Bahrainis not to celebrate the end of Ramadan to protest human rights violations.

Rioting first erupted in the Gulf island state in December 1994 following the arrest of a leading Shiite Moslem cleric who had called on the Sunni-led government to restore parliament. Thirteen people were killed in the first five months of unrest. But so far none have died in the most recent wave.

Bahrain: Foreign Radios' Antigovernment Campaigns Criticized

JN1602110996 Manama WAKH in Arabic 0800 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Manama, 16 Feb (WAKH)— A Bahraini newspaper has strongly criticized the media campaigns launched by some foreign radios against Bahrain. The paper says that these radios want to broadcast news about the events the country is experiencing in a negative way that smacks of attempts at media and political distortion.

The newspaper AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ says that the purpose behind this action is political influence and distortion by focusing on negative aspects and exaggerating them. The paper notes that this method causes Arab listeners to doubt the truthfulness of these radios and the soundness of their news sources.

In a commentary published today, the paper says that these radios use allegations by instigators and secessionists and their leaflets and printed materials as a source for their reports and commentaries. These leaflets and allegations are issued by individuals or groups that have no specific identity or legitimate existence, except what is claimed by the misguided people. This group is taking advantage of these media outlets to propagate negative and instigative manifestations against a sovereign country and member of the United Nations. One cannot deny Bahrain's contributions on the international level and its efforts to achieve the countries of the world [as received], realize stability and prosperity, and increase the country's per capita income.

The paper hopes these radios will redirect their media trends toward Arab listeners and that they will not tackle domestic affairs in a way that is out of line with their objectivity and truthfulness. The paper stresses that listeners in Bahrain and the Gulf are well aware of the negative values that govern the nature of news about the Arab world, as disseminated by foreign media.

AKHBAR AL-KHALIJ concludes by hoping that these trends against Bahrain and the Arab world will not sever the links of amity and respect, if there is any amity and respect left.

Kuwait

Kuwait: 'Text' of New Zakat Law Published

96LH0081A Kuwait AL-WATAN in Arabic 8 Jan 96 p 10

[Article by 'A'ishah al-Rushayd: "AL-WATAN Publishes Text of Law on Payment of Zakat Tax, Approved by Council of Ministers Yesterday; Al-Zumay' to AL-WATAN: Law Is Applicable to Companies and Corporations Only and Is Considered Link in Chain To Implement Islamic Shari'ah Rules; Zakat To Be Applied at 2.5 Percent Rate to Hegira Year and 2.577 Percent to Christian Year; Finance Ministry Determines Zakat Value if Party Subject to Law Submits Untrue Figures; Information Obtained by Authorities Implementing Law Is Confidential and May Not Be Disclosed; Zakat Is Payable in Cash But Acceptable in Kind in Accordance

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With Law's Executive Regulations; Parties Subject to Law Punishable by Fine Equal to One-Half Zakat Value if They Violate Law Provisions"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Dr. 'Ali al-Zumay', minister of waqf and Islamic affairs, has announced that in the session held yesterday morning, the Council of Ministers approved a bill on payment of the zakat [alms tax] duty and has decided to refer it to the National Assembly.

In a statement to AL-WATAN, Minister al-Zumay' said: "This law will be applied only to companies and corporations. It is a link in the chain of efforts to implement the state tendencies that seek to complete application of the shari'ah [Islamic canonical law] rules." He pointed out that this law is tantamount to the legal law which codifies rules of the third Islamic duty and offers the model to be emulated by other laws.

Al-Zumay' added: "This bill is a good start for a new phase to complete application of the shari'ah precepts."

Minister al-Zumay' added that the bill consists of 22 articles containing the main features. Article 1 specifies the parties obligated to pay the zakat, provided that the Council of Ministers sets the starting date of application of the law to each group. It is conditional that the first segment of the groups subject to the law provisions be defined before one year passes on the enactment of the law. Article 2 defines the zakat year and the payable zakat rate.

Al-Zumay' also pointed out that Article 5 defines the authority assigned to collect the zakat proceeds and to spend them on their legitimate venues, noting that this authority is the Ministry of Finance. At the same time, he pointed out that the Ministry of Finance has permitted the minister of finance to commission the Zakat House or any other official authority to perform the procedures to collect and spend the zakat.

The minister also said: "Article 6 empowers faltering business parties to pay the zakat they owe as they deem fit. He also noted that Articles 7-12 specify the zakat estimation and appeal procedures."

He added that Article 18 determines the legitimate venues on which the zakat is to be spent. The same article also bestows confidentiality on information gathered by the tax collection authorities, making it protected by the law. He also noted that Article 19 has assigned the Council of Ministers to issue the law's executive regulations on a recommendation made by the ministries of finance and of waqf.

Minister al-Zumay' added that the cabinet has examined all bills submitted by members of the 1985 National Assembly and the 1992 National Assembly, as well as the bill submitted by the Ministry of Finance and the Alms Tax House. The cabinet has derived a unified bill, utilizing all opinions within a sound shari'ah framework. Al-Zumay' also noted that the cabinet has enlisted the help of some legal systems issued in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to regulate zakat payment. Following is the text of the bill which the cabinet has referred to the National Assembly:

Article 1

The government shall collect the zakat from those obligated to render it in accordance with the Islamic shari'ah rules so it will be expended in its legitimate venues.

The Council of Ministers shall set the date for starting application of the provisions of this law to each group subject to them. It shall also set the percentage each group is required to pay to the Ministry of Finance; and the percentage of the zakat payable in accordance with the provisions of this law that the group may expend on its own in legitimate zakat venues.

Article 2

In applying the provisions of this law, the zakat shall be calculated for the Hegira year at the rate of 2.5 percent of the zakat vessel meeting the requirements of zakat payment in accordance with the provisions of this law.

Parties subject to the provisions of this law and wishing to pay it on the basis of the Christian year may do so, calculating the zakat payable at the rate of 2.577 percent of the zakat vessel.

The executive bylaws shall establish the rules and regulations governing the right of zakat payers who wish to select their zakat year.

If, in accordance with the Islamic shari'ah rules, the zakat vessel is taxable at another rate, then this rate shall be applied.

Article 3

The executive bylaws shall determine the zakat vessel for parties governed by this law in accordance with the Islamic shari'ah rules, after consultation with a shari'ah committee formed on a decree issued by the minister of waqf and Islamic affairs.

Article 4

Parties governed by this law shall be required to render the zakat they owe to the Ministry of Finance in accordance with this law.

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The ministry shall expend the zakat in its legitimate venues in accordance with the rules and regulations specified by the executive bylaws.

The minister of finance may commission the Zakat House or any other official authority to perform the following:

1. Take the measures to collect the zakat, or part thereof, from parties obligated by the zakat rules in accordance with the provisions of this law and of its executive bylaws.

2. Expend the zakat funds, or part thereof, in the legitimate venues in accordance with the rules and regulations set by the executive bylaws.

Article 5

As an exception to the provisions of the preceding article, faltering parties governed by the provisions of this law and engaged n business activity shall pay the zakat required of them in its legitimate venues as they deem fit. A business party shall be considered faltering if it does not make an annual profit equaling the value of the zakat payable or if it makes a net profit smaller than its losses in the preceding year.

Article 6

Parties governed by the provisions of this law shall submit to the Ministry of Finance within a period of no more than three months of the date on which the zakat becomes payable a statement listing the taxable assets, the value of the payable tax, the sum payable to the ministry, and other data noted in the executive bylaws.

Article 7

The zakat value shall be determined on the basis of the statement submitted by the zakat payer in accordance with the preceding article. If the payer does not submit the statement or if he submits a statement proven by evidence not to comply with the truth, then the Ministry of Finance may determine the zakat value.

In all cases, the ministry must notify parties governed by the provisions of this law of the value of the zakat required of them by a registered letter which shall have the power of a notification dispatched by legal methods.

A party that has not submitted a statement or that has submitted a statement but has not coupled it with the payable zakat must make the zakat payment to the Ministry of Finance within a period of no more than one month as of the date on which he is notified of the zakat value he has to pay.

A zakat-estimating decision shall be considered final if not appealed in accordance with the following articles:

Article 8

A decision estimating value of the zakat payable in accordance with the preceding article may be appealed before the judiciary committee stipulated in the next article within a period of no more than 60 days of the date on which the parties concerned are notified of the decision or become definitely aware of it.

The estimate decision may not be appealed in any other way.

Article 9

One or more judiciary committees shall be formed on a decree by the minister of finance to examine appeals submitted in accordance with the preceding article. The committee shall be chaired by a magistrate delegated by the Supreme Judiciary Council and shall have two members, one of whom shall be specialized in shari'ah affairs connected with zakat jurisprudence.

The executive bylaws shall determine the committee convocation site; the procedures to be followed before the committee; and the committee's method of work. The committee must resolve an appeal within no more than one year after it is submitted. The estimate decision and the judiciary committee decision shall have the power of an executable legal instrument, unless appealed in accordance with the provisions of this law.

Article 10

Both the Ministry of Finance and the parties concerned may appeal the judiciary committee's decision before a special district of the Appeals Court within 30 days of the date on which they are notified of the decision or on which they become definitely aware of it.

Procedures observed in appeals before the Appeals Court shall be observed in this kind of appeal and in decisions issued on it.

Article 11

The Ministry of Finance may settle a dispute over payable zakat by arbitration [sulhan] at any time before a final court decision is made on it. Payment of the zakat value in accordance with the settlement shall result in the termination of court litigation cordially [sulhan].

Article 12

Parties governed by this law shall render the zakat in cash. In-kind zakat may be accepted in accordance with rules set by the executive bylaws.

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Article 13

The zakat shall not be dropped until rendered in accordance with the provisions of this law. The authority concerned may take the legal steps to collect the zakat from parties that withhold it.

Article 14

Parties governed by the provisions of this law shall be punishable by a fine of no more than one-half the payable zakat value in the following cases:

- Refusal to submit the statement stipulated in Article 6 of this law.
- Refusal to perform any action required by the law or the use of illegitimate means that result in the non-taxation of all or part of assets subject to the zakat.
- Refusal, without an acceptable excuse, to render the zakat as scheduled by this law.

Article 15

The penalties stipulated by this law may not undermine any severer penalties stipulated by another law.

Article 16

A public lawsuit may be filed only at the request of the minister of finance or of whomever he commissions.

The minister may, in all cases, abandon the public lawsuit before a final decision is made on it if the causes of the lawsuit are voided or if a cordial settlement is reached.

Article 17

Zakat funds shall be expended in their legitimate venues for the "poor, the needy, and those employed to administer the (funds); for those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled (to Truth); for those in bondage and in debt; in the cause of God; and for the wayfarer" [Koran 9:60]. The executive bylaws shall determine the conditions for each expenditure venue.

Article 18

Information and data obtained by the authorities implementing this law shall be confidential and may not be disclosed or be used for any other purpose.

A party gaining information or data by virtue of his job in the implementation of this law may not disclose it for any reason, except in cases permitted by the law.

Whoever violates the provisions of this article shall be punished by a prison-term of no more than one year and a fine of no more than 1,000 dinars, or by one of the two penalties.

Article 19

The Council of Ministers shall issue the executive bylaws for this law on the recommendation of the minister of finance and minister of waqf and religious affairs, after consultation with the committee stipulated in Article 4 of this law.

Article 20

While observing the provisions of Article 1 of this law, zakat payability for each group governed by this law shall begin as of the start of the Christian year following the date on which the Council of Minister issues its decree to begin applying the law to this group.

The Council of Ministers shall issue a decree defining the first group to which this law shall be applied within one year as of the date on which the law is enacted.

Article 21

The minister of finance shall delegate the employees needed to implement this law. They shall be entitled to enter the offices of parties subject to the zakat and places belonging to these parties, excluding homes and the like, to collect data and to examine documents, papers, and legal instruments connected with application of the law. The employees shall write citations underlining violations committed by such parties against this law and shall refer the reports to the authority concerned in accordance with the executive bylaws.

Article 22

The ministers shall, each within his jurisdiction, implement this law, which shall be published in the Official Gazette.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia: Egyptian Envoy on Bilateral Ties

LD1502201596 Riyadh SPA in English 1942 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kuwait, Feb 15, SPA — Egyptian Ambassador to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Muhammad Kamil 'Amr has reiterated that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Egypt constitute the pillars of moderation in the Arab and Muslim world vis-a-vis violent and terrorist movements that exploit Islam for the service of their purposes. The impact of the Saudi-Egyptian relations, which are characterized with a

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unique speciality, is not only confined to the two countries, but it also covers the entire Muslim world, the ambassador told today Kuwait-based AL-SIYASAH newspaper.

The ambassador underscored the importance of enhancing commercial cooperation between the Kingdom and Egypt and said the Kingdom constitutes the first commercial partner of Egypt at the level of the Arab world and the third commercial partner at the level of the entire world.

Saudi Arabia: Paper—Iran Engineers Conflicts With Neighbors

LD1602115696 Riyadh SPA in Arabic 0400 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Riyadh, 16 Feb — Today's Saudi newspapers appeared carrying the following headlines. [passage omitted]

Under the title "Tehran ... Trance and Flabbiness," AL-RIYAD newspaper pointed out that the Iranian regime had not benefitted from the mistakes of its Iraqi counterpart which led the country into the abyss.

The newspaper said that when internal conflicts intensify in Iran, be it the struggle for power between the groups of the traditional right, the left, or the group of liberals and technocrats, particularly during the forthcoming elections for the Islamic Majles, or in connection with engineering a stifling economic crisis in which the country was living, we find that this regime attempts to distract the people by fabricating crises with neighboring countries.

It pointed out that the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council] countries have frequently attempted in good faith to close the door of conflict with Iran so that a balanced regional policy with clear features could be laid down.

It added that the reply came from Tehran toward this orientation consecrating the occupation of the Emirate's islands, even if it required, in their admission, a war lasting for 80 years. Then the scene of interfering in the internal affairs of Bahrain was repeated more than once.

The newspaper stressed that the escalation of such crises in the region would not help develop clearer relations and interests with a regime that was removed from reality and lived in a state of flabbiness and bankruptcy that moved it closer to collapse and annihilation than to survival and persistence.

Saudi Arabia: Paper Criticizes U.S. Over Israeli Nuclear Arms

MM1602123996 Riyadh AL-RIYAD in Arabic 11 Feb 96 p 1

[Unattributed article: "Once Again, What About the Israeli Nuclear Weapons?"]

[FBIS Translated Text] If Israel, as the United States has admitted, possesses 200 nuclear bombs, the Middle East region and perhaps more distant regions are exposed to the Israeli nuclear threat. The U.S. revelation may be nothing new, since Vanunu had already revealed it, earning himself lengthy legal proceedings and a jail sentence....

The amusing paradox, however, is to demand that the Palestinians delete the expression "Israel's destruction" from the PLO's charter even if it is to be considered just a pointless legal formality. One of Israel's most important incentives for making peace with the Arabs is its nuclear power which gives it the initiative and the means of pressure. And yet we find that the United States is not protesting over Israeli armament, and more importantly, it was the one which supplied plutonium to Israel, Iraq, and Iran. Although the last two states are trying to produce these weapons, pressures and what amounts to very close international monitoring, in addition to the ban on providing them with nuclear material that would help them complete their individual projects, could hamper their advance. However, despite the new U.S. admission, we probably will not obtain similar admissions from states which in the past tried to make the arms race in the region part of their strategy and objectives, and perhaps helped Iran and Iraq to produce nuclear weapons.

In the past and in an attempt to surround the region militarily, Israel made an alliance with the shah of Iran when he was obsessed with building a force equal to that of a major European power such as Britain or France. In this alliance, Israel found something which was guaranteed to keep the east of the Arab homeland busy, enabling it to give its full attention to Egypt, Syria, Sudan, and the Arab Maghreb states. Israel may not have forgotten its old objectives, since, once again, it has raised the idea of military cooperation with India with a view to striking a blow at the so-called Pakistani project to produce these weapons, while at the same time renewing its traditional or advanced arsenal, even in the wake of peace. Therefore, even though Iran and Iraq represent a new threat, Israel is even more of a threat because of its military and hostile stance. This calls for the raising of the issue of nuclear weapons, or the states trying to possess them, and ensuring that they are included in peace agreements.

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The United States justifies its forces' intensified presence in the region by the increase in the Iraqi and Iranian threats. This may be plausible in view of the fact that both countries lack rational restraints with regard to turning the whole region into a battlefield. However, to ignore Israel constitutes a different political game, because the excuses for any state trying to possess nuclear or similar weapons are based on this fact. As a precautionary measure and in line with the right to self-defense, it would not be normal for Israel — which still refuses to admit its power or to let it be surpassed, and which will not agree to sign the treaty on nonproliferation of these weapons — to be the only one enjoying this advantage.

Regardless of whether it is states like Iran and Iraq, led by reckless men and lacking the principle of restraint, or whether it is a state such as Israel, which international circles believe to be rational, this is no justification, because all the states which have agreed to remove these weapons or reduce them have totally ignored Israel, not because they fear it, but rather because they want to avoid a confrontation with the United States. This is a disconcerting reason for everyone except the Americans....

Yemen

Yemen: Eritrea Accused of Force Buildup on al-Hanish

NC1502201396 Paris AFP in English 1923 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sanaa, Feb 15 (AFP)—Yemen accused Eritrea on Thursday [15 February] of reinforcing its military presence on the disputed Red Sea island of Greater Hanish, where the two countries fought a deadly clash in December.

"The Eritreans have stationed helicopters on Greater Hanish, along with 25 tanks, launchers for U.S.-made surface-to-air Hawk missiles and they have dug foxholes," a Yemeni government official told AFP.

According to the official, Eritrea "began reinforcing its military presence after the visit by the Eritrean president Isaias Afwerki to Israel at the beginning of February."

Eritrea and Israel announced on February 5 that they would step up cooperation, during a meeting in Jerusalem between Isaias and Prime Minister Shim'on Peres.

Yemen's accusations came as the two sides were involved in French mediation to end their dispute over Hanish al-Kabir (Greater Hanish) after Eritrea seized it on December 18 following a three-day battle in which nine soldiers died.

Yemen: Salih Receives French Envoy on Eritrea Conflict

JN1502190296 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1700 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Lieutenant General President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and Vice President 'Abd-Rabbuh Mansur Hadi received French President Jacques Chirac's envoy Francis Gutmann today. They discussed several issues related to the French mediation efforts to settle differences between our country and Eritrea, which resulted from the Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir Island.

The two sides also reviewed the results of Gutmann's shuttle trips between Sanaa and Asmara with the objective of bringing the two sides' viewpoints closer together to reach an agreement which would lead to a just settlement of the sea border problem between our country and Eritrea.

The president reiterated our country's appreciation for the efforts being made by France, stressing our country's adherence to a peaceful option to settle differences with Eritrea based on international law, in a way that will spare the region tension and guarantee security, stability, and the safety of international navigation in the Red Sea.

Attending the meeting were 'Abd-al-Karim al-Iryani, deputy prime minister and foreign minister; Dr. Muhammad Sa'id al-'Attar, deputy prime minister, and minister of industry, oil and mineral resources; Marwan Nu'man, director of the Foreign Ministry's Africa Department; and (Marcel Logelle), French ambassador to our country.

President Jacques Chirac's envoy arrived in Sanaa today. In a statement to the YEMENI NEWS AGENCY, SABA', he stressed that some progress has been made, not only regarding the French mediation efforts, but also regarding regional efforts in this regard.

He was received by Dr. 'Abdallah al-Zayn, director of the Information Department at the Presidency, the director of the Foreign Ministry's Africa Department, the French ambassador in Sanaa, and a number of the embassy staff.

Yemen: Official Views French Mediation in Eritrea Dispute

NC1602133096 Cairo Voice of the Arabs in Arabic 0615 GMT 16 Feb 96

[Telephone interview with 'Abd-al-Malik Mansur, assistant secretary general of the ruling Yemeni General

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People's Congress, in Sanaa, by Shihatah Abu-al-Majd in Cairo; date not given—live or recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [Abu-al-Majd] In light of the successive developments in the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute, what are the results of the French, Egyptian, and Ethiopian mediation efforts?

[Mansur] First of all, since the start of the problem, which the Eritreans started by occupying the Yemeni Island of Hanish al-Kabir, Yemen has welcomed all mediation efforts. [passage omitted] It seems that all mediation efforts have had an impact and have yielded considerable results. The French mediation appears to be an effective and positive initiative that may lead to a solution or the beginning of one. [passage omitted]

[Abu-al-Majd] Has the French mediation yielded any specific results about which the Yemeni foreign minister briefed President Mubarak on his latest visit to Egypt.

[Mansur] In principle, the French mediation has not yet been announced. Talks are still taking place between the two sides through a French mediator. If any mediation succeeds, it is best not to announce it until both sides have agreed on it. [passage omitted]

[Abu-al-Majd] Do you see any specific outcome on the horizon to resolve the dispute peacefully?

[Mansur] Yes, there has been a decisive development resulting from the French initiative. It calls for setting up an international arbitration commission to discuss the dispute and listen to both sides' views. With regard to details concerning withdrawal, we believe that any discussions should be conducted after the aggressive Eritrean forces have withdrawn from the Yemeni island and after the situation has been restored to its pre-15 December status, the day of the attack. This will create a favorable atmosphere for dialogue, meetings, and successful arbitration. Short of this, the atmosphere will not be suitable for success.

[Abu-al-Majd] Eritrea does not agree with the Yemeni viewpoint. What will its future position be?

[Mansur] The mediators' role is to bring all viewpoints closer together and solve the problem. We rely on Egypt and France to bring the viewpoints closer together to solve the problem, and enable the new arbitration committee to begin its work.

[Abu-al-Majd] When do you think the committee will begin listening to the two sides' views?

[Mansur] I hope it will begin soon.

[Abu-al-Majd] Do you believe that Eritrea will consent to withdrawing their troops to the pre-15 December position?

[Mansur] Eritrea must agree so that ties between the Yemeni and Eritrean peoples can be restored. The Eritrean aggression against the Yemeni island caused major damage to these relations. If Eritrea does not agree, this damage will worsen. Expanding this gap and failing quickly to remove it is not in the interest of the region and the two peoples. [passage omitted]

Yemen: Salih, Mubarak Discuss Eritrea Dispute Over Phone

JN1602110096 Sanaa Yemeni Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1010 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Brother President Lieutenant General 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih and his brother President Muhammad Husni Mubarak of the Arab Republic of Egypt spoke over the telephone last night. They exchanged views on several issues and developments that concern the Arab nation, chief among which are developments in the Red Sea region and the efforts to find a peaceful solution to the dispute between our country and Eritrea caused by the Eritrean aggression on the Yemeni al-Hanish al-Kabir island. They also discussed issues and topics of concern to the two fraternal countries.

Yemen: Opposition Leader's Return Points to 'Reconciliation'

MM1502163996 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 15 Feb 96 pp 1,4

[Report by 'Ali Ibrahim in London: "Yemeni Opposition's 'Financier' Returns on Yemeni President's Airplane"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] It has been learned from informed Yemeni sources that Ahmad Farid (al-Suraymah), one of the opposition leaders who left Yemen after the summer 1994 war, is currently in Sanaa, having returned on Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih's airplane that arrived from Saudi Arabia the day before yesterday, in what could be the start of a reconciliation between Sanaa and a number of opposition leaders abroad. It is believed that Farid was one of the most important businessmen on whom the opposition abroad relied for financing its activities.

An informed source in Sanaa said that Farid's return reflects the atmosphere of detente in Yemen and the fact that the authorities are welcoming the return of all Yemenis abroad in order to carry out the country's reconstruction, and that there are no problems with anyone's return.

Yemeni sources abroad have told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that this is not al-Suraymah's first visit, that

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he is a prominent and well-known contractor and businessman in the Gulf region, and that he has made several visits to Sanaa recently. However, his return to Sanaa the day before yesterday on board President Salih's airplane is different, represents a final return, and points to a reconciliation.

Meanwhile, informed sources in Sanaa have told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that Ahmad Farid's return is normal, especially as he is not listed among the 16 people whom Sanaa wants to refer to justice on charges of causing war and declaring secession, and that contacts with him had started some time ago.

The sources pointed out that the current crisis between Yemen and Eritrea over the Red Sea islands of Hanish, in which all Yemeni political forces adopted a unified position, could open the door to reconciliation between oppositionists abroad and the government. [passage omitted]

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Iraq: UN Spokesman Cited on Oil-for-Food Talks

JN1502195896 Baghdad Republic of Iraq Radio Network in Arabic 1900 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] It was announced at the United Nations that the dialogue session between Iraq and the United Nations held this afternoon concentrated on banking issues related to oil for food, medicine, and other basic needs of the Iraqi people.

A UN official spokesman made a statement in which he said the two delegations continued to discuss technicalities. Today's session concentrated on banking affairs.

The two delegations will hold another session tomorrow afternoon. Iraq's delegation, led by Dr. 'Abd-al-Amir al-Anbari, includes an expert from the Iraqi Central Bank.

Iraq: Official—Turkey's Share of Euphrates Water 'Unfair'

NC1602063296 Cairo MENA in Arabic 1930 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 15 Feb (MENA)—'Abd-al-Sattar Sulayman Husayn, first under secretary of the Iraqi Irrigation Ministry, said that Turkey's measures have made the level of pollution in the Euphrates among the highest in the world.

The Iraqi official, in Damascus to participate in the meetings of the technical committee on the Euphrates water, said the pollution level had reached 1,350 parts per million of dissolved salts. The internationally accepted rate ranges between 800 and 1,000 parts per million.

He told a MENA correspondent in Damascus today that this can affect potable water and agriculture in the long term. Higher-than-allowable pollution rates will render water unfit for drinking.

He noted that Iraq has been holding talks with Turkey since the 1960's, but no agreement has been reached on the share of the Tigris waters.

Husayn said the agreement signed in 1987 between Syria and Turkey regarding Syria's share of the Euphrates water was a temporary one, valid until the Ataturk Dam was full of water. The dam is now full and the allocated percentage is no longer enough for Syria and Iraq, he said.

He added: We are trying to increase this amount because it is unfair for Iraq — [figures indistinct] for Iraq and Syria.

Iraq receives less than half its required amount from the Euphrates Basin under this temporary agreement, he said. He added: Therefore, the water situation in Iraq is troublesome. In clearer terms, Turkey's release of some 500 cubic meters per second of the Euphrates water for both Syria and Iraq is unfair and unacceptable.

The Iraqi official chaired his country's delegation to the meetings of the Syrian-Iraqi technical committee on water. At the conclusion of the committee meetings today, the two sides said the meetings were part of a series of coordination meetings between the two countries on Euphrates water from Turkey.

Iraq: Kurd Official—PUK Ready To Agree With DPK

NC1502223996 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 13 Feb 96 pp 1, 14

[TEHRAN TIMES News Service report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran—Peace will be materialized in Iraqi Kurdistan only through Iran's mediation and no other party, a member of Political Bureau of the Patriotic Union of Iraq's Kurdistan (PUK), Fu'ad Ma'sum, told the TEHRAN TIMES Sunday [11 February].

Even U.S., Britain and Turkey cannot help restore peace in Iraq's Kurdistan, he added.

Evaluating Iran's mediation between PUK and the Democratic Party of Kurdistan (DPK), Ma'sum said during the recent visit to Kurdistan, Iran's representative for Iraq's affairs, 'Ali Aqamohammadi, had positive talks with leaders of the two parties.

Meanwhile, he added although the talks were in line with the agreements already reached between the two sides in Tehran, there has been no improvement in the prevailing situation in the region so far.

He expressed hope that Tehran take a new stride and help restore peace in Iraq's Kurdistan.

Pursuant to a cease-fire agreement signed in Tehran 14 weeks ago, the bloody clashes between DPK led by Mas'ud Barzani and PUK led by Jalal Talabani, ebbed after two months. Stepping up its efforts, Tehran commissioned a delegation headed by Aqamohammadi to Iraq's Kurdistan last January. The U.S. officials stormed at the Iranian delegation visit to Kurdistan.

On present relations with the DPK, he said, his party is ready to hold talks with the DPK but the other side should also prove its goodwill.

We are ready to settle differences with DPK in order to strengthen anti-Saddam front.

On the succor to Saddam Husayn he said that there was no consensus. However, Iraq needs a great revolution

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to topple Saddam Husayn and elect a new leader with a powerful center.

Elaborating on the U.S.-engineered peace plan, he said the draft of the 6-point peace plan has yielded no result so far.

Describing very positive the visit of the Iranian delegation to the region, Ma'sum said the Iranian delegation conferred with the leaders of PUK and DPK on to [as published] further discuss some points of the Tehran agreement. Yet, he added, it is too early to see the final outcome.

Alluding to the promises of the Iraqi President Saddam Husayn for improvement of the condition of life of the Iraqi Kurds, Ma'sum said, we do not expect Saddam to be honest with the Kurdish people and we do not trust his hollow promises.

Without elaborating on the precise time for the next round of negotiations, Ma'sum felt confidant that attempts be continued until peace is restored to Kurdistan.

He concluded saying that Iraqi Kurdistan will never be used as a base for anti-Iran activities. We do not have any relations with Iranian opposition groups and if we find them in our territory they will be arrested and punished.

Iraq: Maintenance of Oil Pipelines in North, South Completed

JN1502214096 Baghdad AL-JUMHURIYAH in Arabic 4 Feb 96 p 4

[Report by Hiyam Ahmad]

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad — The State Enterprise for the Maintenance of Pipelines has completed the maintenance of thousands of valves of different size and pressure all along the oil pipeline network in northern and southern Iraq. Speaking to AL-JUMHURIYAH, Director General Salah 'Aziz Karim said that the enterprise has also set up 12 kilometers of cable connections to 24 valves and re-operated the control units of these vales in al-Karkh depot. He also said that the enterprise has repaired and operated 168 cathodic protection stations all along the 6,000-kilometer pipeline network.

The director general explained that the enterprise carries out regular maintenance work on the pipeline network and that it has repaired leaking pipelines by making and welding pipeline sections to the maintain pipelines stop leakages. Furthermore, he said, the enterprise has repaired and maintained more than 12 heavy pieces of equipment by depending on its own efforts.

The director general pointed out that attempts are currently being made to produce seven small power transformers and two big ones along with their mechanical accessories and small electricity distribution boards in coordination with other enterprises and by depending on national technical expertise.

Iraq: Government Teams Finish Electric Wire Project

JN1502213896 Baghdad AL-QADISIYAH in Arabic 1 Feb 96 p 4

[Report by 'Ali 'Uwayyid]

[FBIS Translated Text] Technical and engineering teams of the Ministry of Industry and Minerals have completed a project for the production of electric wires for different domestic usages with an annual production capacity of 10,000 tonnes.

In a statement to AL-QADISIYAH correspondent, a ministry spokesman said that workers of the State Ur Enterprise for Engineering Industries have completed this vital project, which will meet a major part of the country's needs for this essential item, especially under the circumstances of the unjust embargo on our beloved people.

The spokesman explained that the project will produce electric wires and cables for domestic use, including such measurements as 1.5 X 2, 4 X 4, and 4 X 6 millimeters.

The spokesman added that the project, which has been carried out by depending on the capabilities of the national industrial sector, is considered one of the strategic projects. He noted that the project cost 25 million dinars.

Iraq: Saddam Husayn Meets With Farrakhan

JN1502210896 Baghdad Iraq Television Network in Arabic 1800 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Announcer-read report over video]

[FBIS Translated Text] Leader President Saddam Husayn, may God watch over him, has received Louis Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam Movement in the United States.

At the outset of the meeting, his excellency welcomed the esteemed guest and spoke about the need for a Muslim to entrench his faith without fanaticism, and that he should lend support to all repressed people, whether white or black, Muslim or Christian. This is because a Muslim who has strong faith lends support to all humanity. This is Iraq's approach and faith.

His excellency, may God support him, stressed the need to bolster ties among Muslims, and to promote relations of cooperation among them.

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His excellency, may God preserve him, spoke about the treacherous 30-state aggression against Iraq, and our people's steadfastness in the face of the aggressors, thanks to the deep faith in their hearts. He said: The aggressors were defeated despite their technological advancement. The secret of Iraq's steadfastness in the face of the forces of evil is strong faith in Almighty God and the values of great Islam, despite the fact that Iraq is considered a third world country, and that the aggressors, led by the United States, represent the most advanced states. However, most of them have weak faith. In light of this, Iraq is considered a source of noble values, not only in the Islamic world, but in the world at large.

Farrakhan, leader of the Nation of Islam Movement in the United States, expressed his happiness at visiting Iraq, and his strong admiration for Iraq's legendary steadfastness in the face of the forces of evil and falsehood.

He said: This would not have been possible had it not been for the brave and faithful leadership, represented by the person of the leader president, his faith, and the people's faith in Almighty God. The aggressors' aggression was aimed at dealing a blow to faith, and imposing their hegemony on the region's peoples. The sanctions clamped on Iraq have certainly failed to undermine the Iraqis' will and to destroy their faith.

Louis Farrakhan expressed his solidarity with Iraq, leadership and people, and his readiness to work by all means against the unjust blockade, stressing the solidarity of Muslims in the United States with Iraq.

Foreign Minister Muhammad Sa'id al-Sahhaf and Awqaf and Religious Affairs Minister 'Abd-al-Mun'im Ahmad Salih attended the meeting.

Iraq: Awqaf Minister Meets With Farrakhan

JN1502162896 Baghdad INA in Arabic
0940 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 15 Feb (INA)—Dr. 'Abd-al-Mun'im Ahmad Salih, minister of awqaf and religious affairs, today met with Louis Farrakhan, leader of the black Muslims in the United States. Farrakhan is leading a delegation of 25 U.S. Muslim personalities.

During the meeting, the minister reviewed the ministry's plans and programs to provide the best services to holy shrines, churches, and places of worship. He noted President Saddam Husayn's generous support and care for the religious places and men of religion despite the circumstances of the unfair blockade imposed on our militant people.

Louis Farrakhan praised Iraq's free will and independent course. Commending the people and leadership of Iraq, Farrakhan stressed that the Iraqi scientific, intellectual, and cultural mind is a source of cultural illumination for the Arab and Islamic nation and a force of defiance against hegemony and colonialism.

He added that the evil ones seek to control the region by weakening Iraq, for Iraq possesses a piercing intellect, great wisdom, and a clear faithful line in the service of Islam.

The meeting was attended by Dr. 'Abd-al-Razzaq al-Sa'di, secretary general of the Popular Islamic Conference Organization, and the Awqaf Ministry's directors general.

Louis Farrakhan, leader of the black Muslims in the United States, arrived in Baghdad yesterday on a visit of several days to Iraq.

Iraq: Health Minister Meets With Farrakhan

JN1502165496 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1245 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 15 Feb (INA)—Health Minister Dr. Umid Midhat Mubarak met with Louis Farrakhan, leader of the black Muslims in the United States, and his accompanying delegation.

Reviewing the serious effects of the 30-state aggression and the continued blockade, the health minister noted rising mortality rates among children, women, and the elderly as a result of the acute shortage of food and medicine and other basic requirements.

Iraq: Culture Minister Meets With Farrakhan

JN1602123396 Baghdad INA in Arabic
1145 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Baghdad, 16 Feb (INA) — 'Abd-al-Ghani 'Abd-al-Ghafur, minister of culture and information, met today with Louis Farrakhan, American Muslim leader, and his delegation. During the meeting, the minister said the struggle of the world's people against imperialism and Zionism to achieve their free and dignified will is a legitimate ambition. He added that the unyielding Iraqis set a good example for other nations during the great showdown of the immortal Mother of Battles, led by President Saddam Husayn. The minister praised the positive attitude and the activities undertaken by friendly organizations worldwide, as well as their support for Iraq's efforts to have the unjust blockade lifted and end the suffering of its steadfast people.

The guest delegation expressed appreciation for the people of Iraq and the achievements they have made for

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Muslims, out of their belief in the just causes of other peoples. The delegation said they will work to expose the lies being propagated against Iraq by rancorous enemies. Farrakhan reiterated the firm position of Muslims in his country in support of Iraq's just cause and said that they will work to have the blockade lifted.

At the end of the meeting, the minister answered questions by members of the delegation, which concentrated on the impact of the Iraq blockade. The minister said Iraq managed, within record time, to rebuild the infrastructure, which was completely destroyed by the countries of the aggression. The minister added that the Iraqis have managed to hold their ground in the face of all attempts at colonialist hegemony.

Farrakhan and his accompanying delegation left Baghdad at the conclusion of a three-day visit. The delegation met with several Iraqi officials and visited the al-'Amiriyah shelter and Saddam's Children Hospital. The 25-man delegation of black Americans is touring many countries on a fact-finding mission.

Iraq: Allied Air Activity Protested to Arab League

JN1602115696 Baghdad INA in Arabic 0830 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Cairo, 16 Feb (INA)—Iraq has sent a protest letter to the Arab League secretary general over the violations of Iraqi airspace by U.S., British, and French fighter planes flying from bases in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

In his letter, the Iraqi permanent representative to the Arab League said that the aforesaid planes continued their violations of the Iraqi airspace by carrying out 912 air sorties from 16 to 30 January.

The Iraqi delegate asked the Arab League secretary general to intercede with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to bring these violations to a halt, especially since they are in violation of the Arab League Charter, the Joint [Arab] Defense Pact, the UN Charter, and international law.

Iraq held these two countries fully responsible for the damage caused by these acts and also for the security, economic, and political threats they posed to the people and Republic of Iraq. The letter confirmed Iraq's inalienable legal right to obtain compensation for the material and moral damage caused by these acts.

Iraq: Iran's Velayati May Visit When POW Issue Resolved

MM1602144996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 16 Feb 96 p 4

[Report by Ghassan al-Tahir: "Iranian Official Tells AL-HAYAH: Velayati To Visit Iraq After POW's Issue Settled"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Tehran — Iraqi and Iranian experts held a meeting on the border between the two countries the day before yesterday. It was devoted to discussing outstanding problems between the two countries as regards the prisoners of the eight-year war (1980-1988), missing persons, exchanging mortal remains, and the refugees issue.

Hoseyn Sheykholeslam, Iranian assistant foreign minister for Arab and African affairs, has told AL-HAYAH that "'Ali Akbar Velayati's visit to Baghdad will take place when some obstacles, including the POW's issue, have been ironed out." He added that "the two countries have capabilities and resources which should enable them to develop relations of friendship and cooperation and prompt officials in the two countries to solve these outstanding problems. We believe that time is capable of solving these problems." [passage omitted]

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Israel: Darawshah on Prospects for Yemen Trip, Peres Meeting

MM1502162396 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 15 Feb 96 pp 1, 4

[Report by 'Ali al-Salih: "Arab Knesset Member Carries Message From Peres to Salih"]

[FBIS Translated Text] London — 'Abd-al-Wahhab Darawshah, leader of the Arab Democratic Party and member of the Israeli Knesset, will begin a visit to Yemen 25 February on the invitation of the Yemeni Government.

Darawshah, who will be accompanied by his colleague Talab al-Sani', also a Knesset member, will carry a message from Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres to Yemeni President 'Ali 'Abdallah Salih stressing Israel's neutral position on the Yemeni-Eritrean dispute over the Hanish islands in the Red Sea. He also stresses that Israel did not and will not interfere, nor will it support one party against the other in this conflict.

In a statement to AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT Darawshah said that Peres handed him the message during a meeting yesterday, in which they discussed the visit and various issues such as the release of Palestinian detainees, first and foremost women prisoners, and Shaykh Ahmad Yasin, founder of the Hamas movement. Darawshah added that Peres expressed his willingness to meet with President 'Abdallah Salih anyhwre he chooses.

On the visit arrangements, Darawshah said that "it is at the invitation of the Yemeni Government. It was conveyed to us about a month ago by 'Abd-al-Wahhab al-Ruhani, member of the Yemeni parliament, who is close to President 'Abdallah Salih and who headed the committee observing the Palestinian Legislative Council elections."

Darawshah said that "the invitation was sent to us in appreciation of the patriotic stand adopted by our party on Arab and national issues, on the grounds that it is the only Arab party on the political map in Israel."

Darawshah revealed that he and his colleague will travel to Yemen with Yemeni passports to be provided by the Yemeni Embassy in the Jordanian capital Jordan, where they will arrive on 24 February to meet with King Husayn of Jordan and congratulate the new prime minister, 'Abd-al-Karim al-Kabariti.

Darawshah denied that the Palestinian Authority played a role in arranging the visit, even though he confirmed that he had met with Palestinian President Yasir 'Arafat, who handed him a message to the Yemeni president asking him to open a Yemeni representation office in the self-rule area.

At another level, Darawshah said that Peres promised to release all Palestinian women prisoners once the amendments to the Palestinian National Charter are ratified and the clauses calling for the destruction of Israel are omitted.

According to Darawshah, the Israeli prime minister also promised to release 60 Arab security prisoners in Israel before 'Id al-Adha. He also promised to pay attention to the issues concerning Arabs in Israel, such as the budgets for local councils, leaving places of worship alone, and recognizing unrecognized Arab villages.

Peres requested in return support in the premiership elections, held for the first time in isolation from the legislative elections.

Israel: Foreign Ministry Delegation in Yemen 'Several Weeks Ago'

TA1602084096 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0500 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A Foreign Ministry delegation visited Yemen several weeks ago. IDF Radio has learned that this is not the first such visit. Prime Minister Shim'on Peres has relayed a message to Yemen saying that Israel is not involved in its conflict with Eritrea.

Israel: Territories' Closure To Be Lifted 'Gradually'

TA1502192096 Jerusalem Channel 2 Television Network in Hebrew 1800 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Announcer-read report]

[FBIS Translated Text] It was decided this evening to gradually lift the closure on the territories starting from tonight. Our army affairs correspondent Roni Daniyel reports that the closure on the Gaza Strip will remain in force for the time being because of grave concern about the possibility of a terrorist attack.

There was an attempt to carry out a terrorist attack today near Nabulus. A terrorist squad ambushed an IDF [Israel Defense Forces] patrol on the new road leading to Mount 'Ayval. When the patrol drove by, the terrorists opened fire and detonated a roadside charge composed of four pipe bombs. None of the soldiers were hurt.

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Israel: Baraq Explains Opposition to Palestinian State

TA1502172496 Tel Aviv Educational Television Network in Hebrew 1500 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Interview with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq by Dan Margalit in Tel Aviv—live]

[FBIS Translated Text] [Margalit] Senior Labor members, such as Minister Yosi Beilin, have proposed that the clause negating the establishment of a Palestinian state in the context of a permanent arrangement be eliminated from the party platform. Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq, however, opposes the idea. Good evening to you, sir.

[Baraq] Good evening.

[Margalit] How can you totally rule out the Palestinian option after two Oslo agreements? It almost defies logic.

[Baraq] In my opinion, the proposed change is neither necessary nor beneficial. From Israel's point of view, the best thing would be to see the evolvement of a dialogue between the Palestinians and Jordan on the nature of the solution befitting their relationship and, with this in the background, to forge our permanent agreement in the next three years. In my opinion....

[Margalit, interrupting] But that is a pipe dream. Alignment governments tried that between 1967 and 1993 and failed.

[Baraq] It is no pipe dream. For many years, people said that an agreement with the Palestinians and peace with Jordan were pipe dreams, but the government delivered both. In my opinion, with wisdom, a coolheaded approach, and patience, we have the chance to bring about a solution that is better for us than a Palestinian state. Furthermore, the issue is not entirely within our control. Seeing that we are currently engaged in practical negotiations, I believe a change in the platform is detrimental and unnecessary.

[Margalit] A change may be necessary. Otherwise, it is untenable for the same people who made the two Oslo agreements to say that a Palestinian state is out of the question.

[Baraq] I think the right thing....

[Margalit, interrupting] Or maybe you are not saying that?

[Baraq] I will not go into predictions about what will happen in the end. What I am doing is defending Israel's interests. The proposed change serves the Palestinian interest, hurts Israel's interest, and is incompatible with the solution that is best for us — namely, a triangle made up of the Palestinians, Jordan, and Israel.

[Margalit] So what will happen in the West Bank? Will it be an autonomy? Will it be part of Jordan?

[Baraq] Our neighbors might construe any attempt on our part to dictate a solution as patronizing at best and as some kind of conspiracy at worst. I believe there are enough links between the Jordanians and the Palestinians and vice versa in terms of culture, language, background, and even family ties and common long-term interests to enable them — and it is important that the initiative come from them — to build a sort of confederation. I think this would be good.

[Margalit] In other words, whatever area of the West Bank Israel agrees not to have under its sovereignty in the context of the permanent arrangement will become part of the Jordanian kingdom.

[Baraq] I would expect the Palestinian entity and the Jordanian kingdom to consolidate a common linkage, which we will complement with our permanent arrangements.

[Margalit] Don't you think this idea is outdated?

[Baraq] It is not at all outdated. On the contrary, it may have been unfeasible in the past but today, when the Palestinian entity has chosen its leadership and obtained the world's and Israel's recognition and there is peace between the Jordanian kingdom and us, this will be possible for the first time because it can happen naturally. Nevertheless, we must wait and see. I do not want to predict what will really happen.

[Margalit] Assuming that the Palestinian Authority [PA] fulfills the Oslo agreements with Israel and that Israel is more or less pleased, what is so bad about a solution in the form of a Palestinian state with Yasir 'Arafat, who has already been elected PA president, as its president?

[Baraq] It is too soon to go into that. I will just briefly say that this is not part of the agreement at the moment and that they will take whatever we give them today and then ask for more. Therefore, this would be wrong even from the tactical point of view. Furthermore, you do not tell a state where to deploy its army or where its air force will fly; you do not tell it whether to buy antiaircraft missiles.

[Margalit] That would be part of the agreement with the Palestinian state, just like an agreement with Egypt or Syria.

[Baraq] Furthermore, I do not know of any countries that are told where their capital should be. Therefore, if I may say so, it is not in the interest of Israel or the ruling Labor Party to promote or lead the move toward the establishment of a Palestinian state. This runs counter to our interests.

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[Margalit] Don't you think Labor will lose its credibility if it sticks to a restrictive clause that does not permit it to agree to a Palestinian state in the negotiations on the permanent arrangement?

[Baraq] It is no coincidence that I said this was unnecessary and detrimental. After all, serious discussions will be held on the issue. Clearly, in the three years of negotiations about the permanent arrangement we will fight for our position, which centers on a united Jerusalem under our sovereignty, no return to the 1967 borders, the absolute majority of Israeli settlements remaining under Israeli rule even within the permanent arrangement, and no foreign army deployed between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. These basic demands do not exactly correspond with a Palestinian state, but it would be a waste of time to discuss it now because the Palestinians will probably present different positions.

[Margalit] Sir, if I were Bibi Netanyahu, I would say to you: You are probably a minority within your party; there is actually no difference between your position and ours, so come and join us.

[Baraq] Since I know Bibi very well, I would say quite the contrary. The vision of a Greater Israel fostered through the years, first by Herut and then by the Likud, collapsed in the face of reality and became unrealistic. The Likud today is trying to hitch a ride on Labor's positions. I say to them: Instead of doing that, just give us your voters.

[Margalit] Minister Baraq, thank you very much.

Israel: Netanyahu To Negotiate With PA If Charter, Terror Renounced

TA1602094196 Tel Aviv HA'ARETZ in Hebrew 16 Feb 96 p A3

[Report by Nadav Shragay]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] "If the Palestinian Charter is abolished and the PLO and the Palestinian Authority [PA] announce and prove that they have totally renounced the path of terror, a government under my leadership would agree to negotiate the terms of the permanent arrangement with the PA," Knesset Member Binyamin Netanyahu, the Likud's candidate for prime minister, stated yesterday while touring the Jordan Valley with Tzomet leader Refa'el Eytan.

Their tour came in the wake of Labor Secretary General Nisim Zvili's remarks that his party's platform would include a clause enabling the evacuation of settlements in the Jordan Valley. [passage omitted]

Israel: Baraq, U.S. Envoy Discuss Water Accord Involving Turkey, Syria

TA1602083796 Tel Aviv IDF Radio in Hebrew 0500 GMT 16 Feb 96

[Report by political correspondent Udi Segal]

[FBIS Translated Text] The United States will strive to involve Turkey in a regional water agreement in which the quantity of water directed from Turkey to Syria will be increased. Foreign Minister Ehud Baraq and Dennis Ross discussed this issue in New York early this week. The two discussed the U.S. role in convincing Turkey to join a water agreement in exchange for advancing its economic interests, mainly in the form of trying to incorporate it in the EU. Ross' involvement was intensified after Hafiz al-Asad clarified that he will agree to a compromise on the water issue with Israel in the framework of an agreement in which Syria will receive more water from Turkey while agreeing to concede the water sources flowing to Lake Tiberias.

Tension between Syria and Turkey regarding this issue is long-standing. Turkey claims that al-Asad is allowing the Kurdish underground PKK [Workers Party of Kurdistan] to train in Syrian territory. Syria is still on the U.S. list of countries supporting terrorism.

Israeli sources say the Syrian message is encouraging. In the framework of a complicated regional arrangement it will be possible to solve one of the most complicated problems in the negotiations with Damascus.

Israel: Likud Moves Up Primaries to 18 Mar

TA1502171096 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in English 1500 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Likud has decided to bring forward its primary elections. They are now set to take place on 18 March instead of at the end of March. One of the considerations is apparently the desire to maintain a gap between the Likud ballot and the primary in Labor. Under the current arrangement, there is only one day between the two primaries.

Israel: Likud, Tzomet Support Retaining Jordan Rift Valley

TA1502153496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1500 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] During a tour of the Jordan Rift Valley today, Likud Chairman Binyamin Netanyahu asserted that Israel must maintain possession of the area, adding that Israel's position on this matter will be decided in negotiations with the other side.

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Our correspondent Gil Litman reports that Tzomet Knesset Members Refa'el Eytan and Moshe Peled promised that one of their party's first steps upon assuming power will be to annex the Jordan Rift Valley.

Israel: Poll Shows Peres Continues To Lead Netanyahu

TA1602092896 Tel Aviv YEDI'OT AHARONOT in Hebrew 16 Feb 96 p 1

[Public opinion poll conducted by the Dahaf Institute directed by Dr. Mina Tzemah]

[FBIS Translated Text] Question: Were elections for prime minister held today and the candidates were Shim'on Peres, Binyamin Netanyahu, and David Levi, for whom would you vote?

Answer: Peres — 49 percent; Netanyahu — 35 percent; Levi — 5 percent; undecided — 6 percent; would not vote — 5 percent.

Additional questioning of the uncommitted votes yielded the following results: Peres — 50 percent; Netanyahu — 41 percent; Levi — 5 percent; not able to be categorized — 4 percent.

Question: Were elections to the premiership held today and the candidates were Shim'on Peres and Binyamin Netanyahu, for whom would you vote?

Answer: Peres — 50 percent; Netanyahu — 37 percent; undecided — 7 percent; would not vote — 6 percent.

Additional questioning of the uncommitted votes yielded the following results: Peres — 53 percent; Netanyahu — 44 percent; not able to be categorized — 3 percent.

Some 505 respondents constituting a representative sample of Israel's adult population were interviewed for the poll, conducted on 13 and 14 February. The maximum margin of error is 4 percent.

Israel: PA Aide—Contacts on Permanent Talks Begin

TA1602083596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0800 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An official Palestinian Authority [PA] source says that the Palestinians have launched preliminary contacts with Israel regarding the issues to be raised during the permanent arrangement negotiations slated to commence in May. Basim al-Masri, member of the PLO's negotiations department, told our correspondent Yoni Ben-Menahem that the present contacts focus on determining the general framework for the discussions.

Israel: Shahor, Sha'th Decide To Examine Rafah Airport Issue

TA1602112396 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1100 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Major General Oren Shahor, coordinator of activities in the territories, and Nabil Sha'th today discussed the Rafah airport issue. The two agreed to set up three subcommittees that will examine the issues of security, aviation, and the civilian issues involved in the construction of the airfield. In the meeting, Gen. Shahor emphasized that Israel is demanding to preserve complete security control over the airport and whatever goes on in it, as stipulated in the agreement.

Israel: Peres Said To Support 'Natural Development' of Settlements

TA1502165096 Jerusalem GOVERNMENT PRESS OFFICE in English 1600 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Statement issued by Minister Yehuda 'Amital's spokesman]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Jerusalem — Prime Minister and Defense Minister Shim'on Peres agreed yesterday (Wednesday), 15.02.96, with Minister Rabbi Yehuda 'Amital's demand that the government must provide an answer to the natural development of the Jewish communities in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza. The two met at the Prime Minister's Knesset office. At the meeting, Rabbi 'Amital said that Jewish residents in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza have raised with him the need to prevent the "drying up" of the communities, and to ensure a positive response to their natural needs, such as population growth, housing, public buildings, etc. 'Amital announced that, next week, he will support the proposal to approve new housing units in communities situated across the Green Line, in the framework of strengthening Jewish settlement blocs in Judaea, Samaria, and Gaza. Prime Minister Peres agreed with 'Amital's statement.

Minister Rabbi 'Amital briefed the Prime Minister on his recent visit to the United States and on his meetings with U.S. Vice President Al Gore and U.S. Jewish community leaders. The Prime Minister expressed his appreciation for 'Amital's visit, and said that it strengthened Israeli-U.S. ties and enhanced relations with the U.S. Jewish community. They also spoke about the Public Council for Jewish Education in Israel — which will meet next week under the Prime Minister's auspices — and on the need to continue providing Jewish identity to the daily life of the people and the country.

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Israel: New Southern Command Chief Assumes Duties

TA1602084896 Jerusalem THE JERUSALEM POST in English 16 Feb 96 p 22

[ITIM Report]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Maj-Gen. Shlomo Yanai yesterday took over as OC Southern Command, replacing Maj.-Gen. Sha'ul Mufaz, who took over as head of Planning Branch at General Staff Headquarters and will soon join the team negotiating with the Syrians.

Yanai, 44, received the Medal of Valor after being wounded twice in the Yom Kippur War. He served in a variety of Armored Corps commands before taking over the Planning and Armament Division in the Ground Corps Command three-and-a-half years ago. He is a graduate of Tel Aviv University and studied at the National Security College in Washington.

Mufaz, 48, participated in the Entebbe raid, and commanded the officers' school and later a paratroop brigade. He was appointed commander of IDF [Israel Defense Forces] forces in Judaea and Samaria in August 1993, and then served as OC Southern Command for the past 14 months.

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Jordan: Gaza Palestinians to Receive 5-Year Passports

MM1502160996 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 15 Feb 96 pp 1,4

[Report by Mazin Hijazi in Amman and AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in London: "Jordanian Passports for 58,000 Gaza Palestinians"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Sources in the Jordanian Interior Ministry announced yesterday that the government will grant five-year Jordanian passports to 58,000 Gaza Palestinians residing in Jordan. Authoritative Palestinian sources have explained that this Jordanian measure does not mean granting them citizenship.

The Jordanian sources told AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT that this is intended to regularize the situation of those Gaza Palestinians who have neither Jordanian citizenship nor Jordanian passports and who were dispersed from their homes since 1967, in addition to those who returned from Kuwait in 1990.

The sources confirmed that Jordanian Interior Minister Dr. 'Awad Khulayfat is studying all applications and examining the issue of granting citizenship, in preparation for implementing the necessary arrangements in accordance with current regulations and laws. They added that the files of the Gaza Palestinians who applied for citizenship will be viewed mainly from the humanitarian angle, since some of them have been in Jordan for over 20 years and do not hold any documents enabling them to travel or reside in other states.

The minister will also examine the issue from the political perspective, in conjunction with the Palestinian National Authority [PNA], with a view to finding an equitable and suitable solution to be agreed by both sides.

Before the PNA was established, Jordan had granted some of the Gaza Palestinians temporary two-year Jordanian passports for humanitarian reasons. Obtaining this passport does not mean obtaining citizenship.

The Palestinian embassy in Amman denied knowledge of any current Jordanian measures in this respect, and denied also any contacts, so far, between Jordan and the PNA to discuss the issue.

However, the authoritative Palestinian sources have said that the matter is only meant to facilitate travel formalities for the Gaza Strip's citizens and make it easier for them to travel, in line with the new Jordanian Government's directives.

These sources said that, in the past, a number of Gaza citizens in Jordan obtained temporary two-year Jordanian passports, and that some of them had their passports withdrawn when they applied for renewal because the new measure is the early outcome of Palestinian- Jordanian coordination on resolving the pending issues concerning Palestinian citizens outside the homeland.

Jordan: New Public Security Director Appointed

JN1502211396 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A royal decree was issued approving a Cabinet decision to appoint Major General Nasuh Muhyi-al-Din Marzuqah as Public Security director as of 15 February 1996.

Another royal decree was issued approving a Cabinet decision to retire Major General 'Abd-al-Rahman al-'Adwan as of 15 February 1996.

Jordan: King Husayn Returns From Egypt Visit

JN1502212096 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 2100 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] His Majesty King Husayn returned home from Cairo this evening following a brief working visit to the sisterly Arab Republic of Egypt. During the visit, his majesty held talks with His Excellency President Muhammad Husni Mubarak of Egypt. [passage omitted]

Jordan: King Orders Refurnishing Dome of the Rock Mosque

JN1502192396 Amman Radio Jordan Network in Arabic 1200 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] His Majesty King Husayn ordered that the Dome of the Rock Mosque in holy Jerusalem be refurnished at his own expense. This step complements the Hashemite reconstruction of the holy mosque.

A statement was issued to this effect by the Royal Hashemite Court. The following is the text of the statement:

His Majesty King Husayn learned that the carpeting inside the Dome of the Rock Mosque is worn out. His majesty, may God watch over him, ordered that the holy mosque be refurnished at his majesty's own expense. The objective of this is to please God in this holy month, make prayer easy for worshipers, urge people to do good deeds, and complement the Hashemite reconstruction of the holy mosque.

The Royal Hashemite Court beseeches God to accept this deed, watch over his majesty, and grant him victory.

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Lebanon: al-Hirawi on Peace, Media's Role, Elections

NC1502194596 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1640 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Speech by Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi at fast-breaking banquet at B'abda Palace in Beirut—live]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] Is it reasonable, under these delicate regional and international circumstances, to ask the state that is building peace to mend, at the push of a button, the aftermath of a bloody ordeal that lasted for 18 years? Some of us were elated amid the fire and delusions of that ordeal, and today they are offering themselves as knights on demand for every occasion and in every sector, claiming to have solutions to the mess they themselves helped to make. Shamelessness seldom builds confidence, but great objectivity, realism, and solidarity speed up recovery.

My beloved ones: We ought to combat not only the ambitions of the outside world, but also everything that helps create divisions and backwardness at home. We ought to fight deviation and corruption; we ought to struggle to strengthen social solidarity. Dear brothers, our battle is here at home just as much as at the border.

Seeing the divergent views, based on our constitutional powers we tried a few days ago to motivate the Lebanese to consider making a law for parliamentary elections, one that realizes the ambitions of all Lebanese and embodies their unanimous will. We did that because we want the parliamentary election to be held; and they must be held. We must cooperate to overcome anything that may hinder the election.

We will have to face many developments and make fateful decisions in the next stage, and everybody must participate to build the future of Lebanon. Remember that nothing is more precious than Lebanon's interests. We want the coming parliamentary elections to serve not as a cause of differences, but as an additional opportunity for unity. We will not accept an election law that fails to ensure representation for all the Lebanese and serves Lebanon's interests and unity. We know, however, that in a democratic country, no law can be acceptable to all. [passage omitted]

My beloved ones: On every development, minor or major, we compete among ourselves in casting doubts. We appear to still need to learn some things. Let us work for Lebanon's sake. Who wants to restrict freedoms and shut up mouths? You all agree on the need to organize the media. Does this organization mean infringing on freedom? Freedoms cannot be protected by practicing oneupmanship. Please raise the level of your arguments in order to develop democracy and to prove that we deserve this homeland.

Democracy is boosted by the opposition, and opposition succeeds to the extent it wins the respect of the people and the officials themselves. The state opposes anyone violating or destroying freedom. Freedom does not mean harming the sanctities of the homeland, foremost of which is the judicial system. No one, official or otherwise, should slight the role of the judiciary. Is justice not the basis of rule? Freedom does not mean demolishing national stability, offending people's dignity, or undermining Lebanon's interests and relations.

The quality of the media is a measure of democracy; the level of the media is a measure of enlightenment; and the message of the media is key element in national accord and the triumph of citizenship. Media are our forum for a new Lebanese and Arab renaissance, just as the press and universities were the vehicle for renaissance in the past age.

Let us stop being preoccupied with ourselves at home, busy with a tug of war about this issue or that. There is much talk abroad about Lebanon's independence and the need not to sacrifice it. At any rate, Lebanon's independence will never be a bargaining chip or cause for fear. Our independence is a fact that no one can negate. When we set out on the march of national peace, we stressed that Lebanon stands by all Lebanese. This has been proved; and I hope that you will prove, more and more, that all Lebanese stand by the whole of Lebanon.

My beloved ones: Our domestic strength also promotes our victory at the border as we work to restore our occupied land in the south and the Western al-Biqa'. Having parallel Lebanese and Syrian negotiating tracks is the way to achieve a just and comprehensive peace. Such a peace means [Israeli] withdrawal from the south, the Western al-Biqa', and the Golan.

Israel cannot set conditions and make demands of us. Before it makes offers and demands, it has to allow the United Nations to enter the camp of the Lebanese prisoners in al-Khiyam; indeed, it has to release our sons now in jails in both Israel and our occupied territory. We cling to every single inch of our land in the same way we cling to our sanctities. Security Council Resolution 425 is there, so let Israel implement it. Our Army and security forces have proven capable of strengthening security at home and they are capable of safeguarding our security at the border.

My beloved ones: At this time of major changes, we call on you to demonstrate solidarity, to work, to think

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of Lebanon first so that we may not cry over missed opportunities, as we all cried over our plight and its aftermath. By upholding the right, Lebanon can regain its health. Many happy returns. Long live you and Lebanon.

Lebanon: Syrian, French Foreign Ministers Visit

96AA0132A London AL-HAWADITH in Arabic 26 Jan 96 p 28

[FBIS Translated Text] Beirut—Last week Beirut was the scene of intensive diplomatic activity. The importance of this activity should not be underestimated because it was directly connected with the Syrian-Israeli talks in the U.S. state of Maryland and the results they achieved. This urgent activity was essential in view of the close connection between the Syrian and Lebanese tracks.

This activity was manifested in two visits: The first visit was by Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq al-Shar', who conveyed a message to Lebanese President Ilyas al-Hirawi from Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad regarding the outcome of the U.S.-sponsored Syrian-Israeli talks. He also briefed him on some details in the presence of Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri, Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, and Foreign Minister Faris Buwayz. The second visit was by French Foreign Minister Herve de Charette, who met with the three leaders, his Lebanese counterpart, and the spiritual leaders. Besides the peace talks on the Syrian-Lebanese track, the French foreign minister discussed the situation in Lebanon and the stage that will follow the possible achievement of tangible results in the negotiations between Damascus and Tel Aviv, which could positively reflect on Lebanon.

The Syrian foreign minister's visit, which will be followed by a meeting of the Lebanese-Syrian Supreme Council in Damascus, was an indication of the positive atmosphere that has prevailed in the Syrian-Israeli talks in Maryland. The Syrian envoy did not go into detail. He only conveyed a positive picture, noting that further discussions will be held when the three leaders and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Michel al-Murr visit Damascus to attend the meetings of the Supreme Council. These meetings will be held against the background of regional and international political developments, which would supposedly be positive and fruitful.

During his visit to Beirut, Minister al-Shar' conveyed the positive atmosphere that prevailed in these negotiations without going into detail, although Lebanese officials would have liked to learn more about everything that has taken place on the Syrian-Israeli track.

Minister al-Shar' reportedly wanted only to reassure the Lebanese officials about the constants that still govern the Syrian position on the link between the Syrian track and the Lebanese track. He thought that the Supreme Council's meeting will provide an important opportunity for a comprehensive evaluation of these negotiations.

Minister al-Shar' defined the Syrian constants as follows:

1. Syria is not prepared to negotiate on behalf of Beirut. Al-Shar' indicated this clearly in the closed meeting held at the Presidential Palace. AL-HAWADITH has learned that al-Shar' was responding to a question on whether the Lebanese issue was discussed on the sidelines of the Maryland meetings. He told the three leaders and Minister Buwayz that Syria has not and will not raise any issue pertaining to the Lebanese track, which must be activated when the desired progress takes place on the Lebanese track.

A state leader quoted Minister al-Shar' as saying that the Lebanese issue was raised at the request of the Syrian delegation, which reemphasized the Syrian constants regarding the connection between the two tracks and need to abide by these constants to reach an agreement and sign it simultaneously.

2. Despite the campaigns against it, Damascus refuses to act on behalf of Lebanon or take the place of the Lebanese delegation in the negotiations over issues that pertain to the Lebanese track. The Syrian foreign minister's remarks at the end of his talks were interpreted as a new message to the skeptics that Damascus totally refuses to cancel Lebanon's role in the peace talks and that the coordination between the two countries in the negotiations has so far prevented any political setbacks and prevented Israel from dealing with any of the two countries separately.

The most important element in Minister al-Shar' statement was his reference to the possibility of achieving an agreement before the end of this year. However, he refused to comment on Israeli Prime Minister Shim'on Peres' statement that he would be forced to call for early Israeli elections at the beginning of June if the negotiations did not achieve the desired results before this date.

Although Minister al-Shar' refused to link between his positive expectations and the Israeli threat to hold early parliamentary elections, Western diplomatic sources viewed Peres' statement as an attempt to anticipate the positive results of the negotiations. Peres thinks that the negotiations would achieve their desired results before the election date, and if they did, there would be no need to call for early elections.

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The Syrian foreign minister's visit, this time, underlined the importance of the new Syrian approach to the negotiations. He referred to this approach during his earlier visit to Beirut when he praised Washington's pressuring role in the negotiations.

The new Syrian approach al-Shar' talked about in the Presidential Palace in B'abda was not designed to neutralize the U.S. Administration and praise its role so it will not side with Israel. It shows that the negotiations have entered a new stage, and this was evident when Syria agreed to include military officers in its negotiating team. Syria's consent was not designed to satisfy only the United States; it was based on the fact that the negotiations have reached a new stage demanding the involvement of officers.

The question remains: Was there any connection between the visits of the Syrian and the French foreign ministers to Beirut or has the timing of the two visits, at the beginning of last week, given such an impression?

Official political and diplomatic circles think that the results of the two visits should not be separated, although no prior Syrian-French coordination had taken place about the visits and although only a few hours separated their arrival in the Lebanese capital.

These circles said that de Charette's visit did not constitute an objection to the Syrian foreign minister's talks or an attempt to undermine the Syrian role and make people think that Damascus and Paris are competing for a role in Lebanon.

De Charette's statement that the elections will be watched internationally did not mean that he supported the presence of international observers. He only wanted to let everyone know that the world will be watching when preparations begin for the elections.

One can understand from the French minister's statement that he does not support the opposition's hardline position about the elections and about the relations with Syria. He realizes that the improvement in Syrian-French relations will allow Paris to play a role in improving the Christians' relationship with Syria.

In anticipation of the new stage, which the peace talks could reach sooner or later, France, under the leadership of President Chirac, is continuing its peaceful onslaught in Lebanon to compensate for what it has missed. It is trying to narrow the gap between Damascus and Bkirki [seat of the Maronite patriarchate] because it realizes that the achievement of peace means open doors among all the countries, and, therefore, the relations between Syria and a principal Christian party must not remain tense. The Christians were asked to offer something in return for guarantees that Lebanon will not melt away when comprehensive peace is achieved and will retain its distinctive role and independence. Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad has emphasized this point on several occasions when referring to the future of Lebanese-Syrian relations.

Lebanon: 4-Story Building Collapses; Residents Trapped

NC1502173496 Beirut Radio Lebanon in Arabic 1630 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A building in Wadi Abu-Jamil collapsed this morning and the family of Hajj Muhammad Jawad 'Ayyad, also known as Abu-Munir, is still trapped under the rubble. The family consists of the wife, Aminah Muhammad 'Ayyad; the wife of the son 'Adnan, Randah Fadil 'Ayyad; and their sons 'Adnan 'Ayyad 'Abbas, 2 years, and Muhammad, 6 months. So far, 10 injured people have been rescued from the rubble. They are: Fawwaz Tabbush, Muhammad Badi, 'Adnan 'Ayyad, Hasan Kamil al-Sha'ir, Muhammad Adam, 'Abd-al-Karim Dabbuq, Syrian workers Husayn Talal Dir'i, 'Ali 'Awad, and Akram Wannus, and Egyptian worker Yahya Mansur. The Internal Security Forces are working to rescue survivors. The four story-building collapsed while workers from the Solidere company were making arrangements to evacuate the building.

At the scene, Deputy Muhammad Birjawi and Amal Political Bureau member 'Ali al-Khalil denounced the incident and blamed the Solidere company for it.

Upon learning of the incident, Chamber of Deputies Speaker Nabih Birri contacted Prime Minister Rafiq al-Hariri, urging that every agency be mobilized to help rescue the residents. He also asked Interior Minister Michel al-Murr to immediately detain those responsible for the incident and to begin a comprehensive investigation. Minister al-Murr asked Beirut Governor Nicholas Saba, the Civil Defense director, and the Beirut police commander at the Internal Security Forces to go to the scene, help with the rescue operation, and open an immediate investigation.

Lebanon: 32 Prisoners Released From al-Khiyam Prison

NC1602093596 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 0800 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] On the occasion of 'Id al-Fitr and upon the instructions of South Lebanese Army Commander General Antoine Lahd, 32 detainees were released from the al-Khiyam prison this morning. [passage omitted]

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Lebanon: 'Heavy Fire' Exchanged Between Hizballah, IDF, SLA

TA1602061496 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0600 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] This morning there are heavy fire exchanges between the Hizballah terrorists and the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] and SLA [South Lebanese Army] in south Lebanon. The terrorists directed a heavy artillery barrage at IDF and SLA positions in all parts of the security zone early this morning. Sources in south Lebanon told our correspondent Ilan Ro'e that the bombardments mark the anniversary of the killing of Hizballah leader 'Abbas al-Musawi by the IDF, as well as the end of the Ramadan.

Lebanon: 'Resistance' Attacks Israeli Positions

NC1602074896 Ba'labakk Voice of the Oppressed in Arabic 0630 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Islamic Resistance heroes this morning carried out a series of attacks on the [Israeli] occupation forces in the occupied strip.

On the occasion of the Jerusalem Day anniversary, Islamic Resistance mujahidin launched attacks on the Israeli forces' positions in al-Suwayda', al-Dabshah, 'Ali al-Tahir, al-Burj, 'Alman, al-Shumariyah, and other positions in western al-Biqa' at 0600 today. The resistance fighters used machine guns and rockets in their attacks, which left several enemy troops dead or wounded. Enemy fortifications were also destroyed.

Lebanon: 3 SLA Troops Wounded in 'Terrorists' Attack

NC1602090096 Kafr Killa Voice of the South in Arabic 0800 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] A number of South Lebanese Army [SLA] positions extending from al-Naqurah to Jazzin were bombarded by the terrorists this morning. Three SLA soldiers were slightly injured. Immediately afterward, SLA forces returned fire with the support of SLA and Israeli artillery.

Lebanon: IDF, SLA Soldiers Wounded in Fire Exchanges

TA1602093196 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 0900 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] An IDF [Israel Defense Forces] officer was moderately wounded in the artillery exchanges that are still continuing in south Lebanon. The officer was transferred to Haifa's Rambam Hospital and his family was notified. Three SLA [South Lebanese Army] soldiers were also wounded — according to another version five SLA soldiers were wounded. Hizballah suffered two casualties and correspondents report that two civilians, one of them a girl, were wounded in two villages.

The terrorists have so far directed 120 katyusha rockets and mortar shells at dozens of targets in the security zone. This is reported by our monitor Mikha'el Gurdus.

Hizballah activists are currently holding a large rally in south Beirut to commemorate Jerusalem Day, with Hasan Nasrallah, the organization's secretary, delivering a speech. Today also marks the anniversary of Shaykh al-Musawi's killing.

IDF and SLA artillery directed hundreds of shells toward Hizballah targets following this morning's attack.

This morning the IDF released 27 prisoners from the al-Khiyam prison in the security zone on the occasion of 'Id al-Fitr.

Lebanon: 'Tense Calm' in South as IDF Warns Hizballah

TA1602121596 Jerusalem Qol Yisra'el in Hebrew 1200 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Tense calm prevails in south Lebanon at the present time. [passage omitted]

Senior officers in the IDF [Israel Defense Forces] Northern Command warned Hizballah that if it attacks Israel's northern settlements with katyusha rockets the IDF will retaliate sharply.

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Syria: Water Talks With Iraq Conclude

JN1502117596 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1615 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Meetings of the joint Syrian-Iraqi water coordination committee were concluded in Damascus today. The committee is co-chaired by Engineer Barakat Hadid, assistant irrigation minister, and 'Abd-al-Sattar Salman Husayn, first under secretary of the Iraqi Irrigation Ministry. The meetings lasted for five days and were attended by the delegations of the two countries.

In a statement to a SYRIAN ARAB NEWS AGENCY, SANA, correspondent, Assistant Irrigation Minister Hadid said: During the meetings, the two sides completed examination of topics related to the waters of the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers that were tackled by the two delegations earlier. The two sides also discussed the means of working out a fair and reasonable distribution of water among the three littoral countries: Syria, Iraq, and Turkey.

Engineer Hadid said: The two sides exchanged available information. It was emphasized that coordination in this field should continue in order to reach the projected goal of a fair distribution of river water and eliminate the pollution of water and land in Syria and Iraq caused by the poor quality of water coming from Turkey due to the agricultural drainage water of the new projects being established in Turkey and waste water.

Concluding his statement, he said: Viewpoints of the two countries' delegations were identical. It was agreed to continue work and coordination in this respect.

Syria: Officials Comment on Damascus Water Talks

JN1502164996 Paris Radio Monte Carlo in Arabic 1200 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Report by Thana' al-Imam from Damascus]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Syrian and Iraqi sides to the joint technical committee meetings [on the Euphrates water] described the talks as successful as both sides agreed on all the measures that will be taken against Turkey for building more dams on the Euphrates river. These dams will prevent the future flow of water to Syria and Iraq in the absence of a three-way sharing agreement among the three parties and will increase the pollution rate which has reached alarming levels with respect to potable water and water for irrigation in the two countries.

Munib al-Rifa'i, head of the legal department at the Syrian Foreign Ministry, told Radio Monte Carlo that Syria and Iraq will do their best to get Arab support through the Arab League Ministerial Council's session in Cairo next month to back the two countries' calls on Turkey to share the river's water in accordance with the law on waterways for nonmaritime purposes. Al-Rifa'i said it is possible to punish the companies which finance and participate in building the dams by depriving them of any project at least in Syria and Iraq. He called on the financing companies and countries to suspend work until the three parties reach an agreement on water- sharing.

Iraqi delegation head 'Ab-al-Sattar Sulayman Husayn denied reports that the technical committee had discussed setting up a joint working committee that could cross the Syrian-Iraqi borders that were closed when relations between the two countries were severed in the early 1980's. He said that these reports are press illusions.

Syria: No Agreement Reached on Opening Iraq Border

MM1602111996 London AL-HAYAH in Arabic 16 Feb 96 pp 1, 6

[Report by Ibrahim Humaydi: "Syria Refuses To Open Border With Iraq"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Damascus — The Iraqi delegation to the water talks in Damascus failed to obtain Syria's agreement to open the closed Syrian-Iraqi border to joint working groups. The Syrian side was keen not to give any direct "political dimension" to the meetings, despite the political interpretations that normally accompany any meetings between Syrian and Iraqi officials, in the light of the severance of diplomatic relations and the closure of the border since the early eighties.

However, the two sides agreed at the end of the meetings of the Syrian-Iraqi committee assigned to discuss the water issue to "coordinate fully" between Damascus and Baghdad in international organizations in order to confront the Turkish measures on the Euphrates and to "compel" Ankara to accept "a fair distribution" of the river's waters among Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. [passage omitted]

After the Iraqi delegation visited a number of projects in northern Syria, the heads of the delegations signed yesterday the minutes of the regular coordination meeting. Engineer 'Abd-al-'Aziz al-Masri, member of the Syrian delegation, has told AL-HAYAH that the minutes contained a number of points, including that "the two delegations exchanged hydrological information and water level measurements concerning the Euphrates. The Iraqi delegation supplied the Syrians with information about Tigris waters, because we do not have a measuring station there. And information was exchanged on the

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projects either side wants to set up on the two rivers. The two sides agreed to continue coordination in order to achieve the common aims represented in a fair and reasonable distribution of Euphrates waters. The two sides stressed the importance of holding a meeting of the Syrian, Iraqi, and Turkish foreign ministers to secure a political decision on the distribution of water." He said that the reason for the emphasis on a meeting of ministers is the fact that "the problem is political, not technical, at present, and it is futile for the experts to meet without any political guidance." [passage omitted]

Engineer Muhammad Hasbani, member of the Syrian delegation, told AL-HAYAH that the Syrian and Iraqi sides "believe that the Arab League is called upon to make a move and decisive decisions on the Euphrates issue." He pointed to the "warnings" Syria has addressed to the European companies expected to build the Birecik dam. He also said that the Syrian Foreign Ministry has sent a copy of the "protest memorandum" to UN Secretary General Butrus-Ghali and international organizations.

The Iraqi delegation will depart Damascus today for Baghdad via Jordanian territory.

Syria: Official on Meeting With Iraq, Turkey on Euphrates

NC1602103296 Cairo MENA in Arabic
1915 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Damascus, 15 Feb (MENA) — Syria has emphasized that sharing the international waters of the Euphrates river is the only solution to all problems and differences with Turkey. It stressed that its call for a three-way meeting among the foreign ministers of Syria, Iraq, and Turkey is still valid in order to discuss the pending problems over the distribution of the Euphrates waters among the three countries that share the river. Syria also stressed that no solution to the problems between Syria and Turkey can be reached without a political decision at the highest level.

Dr. Munib al-Rifa'i, head of the Legal and Treaties Department at the Syrian Foreign Ministry, told MENA today that if Syria has to, it will spare no effort in turning to all international and legal forums to solve problems with Turkey in a way that supports bilateral relations, which Syria is eager to improve.

The official said Syria invited Turkey to a trilateral meeting in any location and repeated the invitation at the end of last year but did not receive a reply. The invitation is still open, and the meeting can be held anywhere the three countries decide, he said.

During a visit to Syria in 1993 by then Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Ozal, it was agreed to hold a meeting between the foreign ministers of the two countries at the end of the same year, but the meeting never took place.

Dr. al-Rifa'i stressed that Syria is interested in establishing positive relations with Turkey as a neighbor linked to Syria by a long history. He said an agreement to share the common international waters would end any problems between Syria and Turkey and support bilateral relations, which Syria is eager to improve.

Dr. al-Rifa'i added: Syria expects the Arab League to take a firm position in support of the Arab right to the joint waters of the Euphrates in its next meeting at the foreign ministry level.

The Syrian-Iraqi technical committee ended its periodic meetings this afternoon in Damascus, and the joint minutes of the six-day meetings was signed.

Dr. al-Rifa'i said the conferees discussed Turkey's implementation of new projects on the Euphrates, which was done without consulting the other countries that share the river's water. This is contrary to international law, he said. He added that the conferees also discussed Turkey's release of a large amount of polluted water across the border with Syria, which endangers the environment and the lives and health of men and animals, especially in a region on which half the Syrian people depend on for daily subsistence.

The Syrian official said the Syrian and Iraqi delegations expressed their decisions to work together in the regional and international fields to commit Turkey to respect international law, not to harm the other two partners of the Euphrates and Tigris waters, and to share the common international waters among the three countries in a fair and acceptable manner in accordance with international law. This is the only solution to all problems and differences with Turkey, giving the three countries their legitimate right and laying the bases for the sharing of the water, he said.

He described the Syrian-Iraqi committee meetings as technical meetings that address water issues. The committee meets whenever it is necessary, he said.

He said the date for the next meeting will be decided through the two countries' diplomatic channels and will be held in Baghdad.

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Syria: Government Official on Water Dispute With Turkey

NC1502182296 Cairo MENA in English 1735 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Damascus, Feb 15 (MENA)—Syria has stressed that sharing the Euphrates River waters is the only solution to all problems with Turkey.

Dr. Munib al-Rifa'i, of the Foreign Ministry, told MENA today that Syria would not hesitate to resort to all international forums in order to settle any differences with Turkey with a view to strengthening relations which Syria is keen on developing for the better.

Syria: Commentary Recalls Golan Strike, Reiterates Peace Position

JN1502184996 Damascus Syrian Arab Republic Radio Network in Arabic 1235 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Station Commentary]

[FBIS Translated Text] Between the last round of the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations and the coming one due to take place late this month, we celebrate the immortal anniversary of the strike staged by the Syrian Arab people of the occupied Golan, who resisted the annexation of their land. Every year on this anniversary, the Syrian Arab people recall the epic events of one of the longest strikes in history, which lasted for over five months of steadfastness, resistance, and sacrifices. The valiant Golan remained steadfast even when its newborn babies were deprived of milk and medicine, and when its adults suffered from food shortage, lack of job opportunities, curfews, dismissal of teachers and employees, and from extremely violent confrontations with the occupation forces.

All this took place during a very harsh winter when heavy snow covered the Golan, thus increasing the harshness of the strike conditions, but further enhancing the will of the Syrian Arab citizen on the Golan. The anniversary of the great Golan strike bears an eloquent message to the international community and the parties of the peace process, particularly those in Israel who are speaking about a referendum on the future of the Golan. This strike affirmed what has already been settled once and for all; namely, that the entire occupied Golan is an indivisible part of the Syrian Arab land.

In their strike and resistance, the brave people of the Golan offered a legitimate militant method for the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 stipulating full Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Golan to the 4 June 1967 lines and of Security Council Resolution 497, which considers the Israeli Knesset decision annexing the Golan to Israel as null and void and as if it had never existed. This international resolution also applies to the consequences of the Israeli annexation decision such as the settlements, for example.

These international community resolutions also fully apply to the land-for-peace principle, which Syria adopted as a strategic option and on whose basis it joined the peace process that was launched by the U.S. Administration. The United States continues to sponsor the peace talks and to participate in them on this basis, on the Madrid Conference as a terms of reference, and on the relevant international resolutions.

Therefore, those concerned with the peace process must realize that the eventual dangers resulting from the occupation of the Golan pose a threat to the peace process. But, they will not jeopardize the Syrian Arab identity or the fate of the occupied Golan, because the Syrian position is based on national and pan-Arab constants and on international legitimacy. There will be no relinquishment of one iota of the Golan soil, nor will there be an acceptance of any form of Israeli occupation of the Golan. Syria is serious about attaining a genuine peace that guarantees security and stability for all on the basis of full withdrawal to the 4 June 1967 lines, as well as equal [mutasawiah] and equitable [mutakafi'ah] security arrangements on the two sides of the border.

This is the consistent Syrian position that is committed to peace. The entire world is aware of Syria's seriousness in this regard, of its eagerness to render peace efforts a success, and that it seeks to realize the international consensus for a just peace that comprises all, and safeguards the dignity of all parties and the security and stability of the region and the world.

Syria: Article Urges Government To Improve Investment Climate

JN1602130596 Damascus AL-BA'TH in Arabic 27 Dec 95 p 4

[From the "Spotlights" column by 'Ali 'Abbud: "The Investment Climate Still Needs More"]

[FBIS Translated Text] No matter what is said about Investment Law No. 10 of 1991, it still is a big and timely step forward and has led to the establishment of 1,349 projects as of August 1995. But many things have changed in the almost five years since the law was issued, and people are beginning to believe that an investment law alone is not sufficient to attract investment and revitalize the national economy. Tax facilities and customs exemptions are insufficient, even if they go up to the maximum level. In fact, a minimum level of facilities and exemptions would have been quite

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sufficient if our existing laws and regulations had been in a position to created a better and more competitive investment climate. No matter how significant Law No. 10 is, it is just one factor in the creation of such a climate.

We believe that sufficient time has passed since the enforcement of the investment law to enable us to appraise the advantages and disadvantages of this law, especially now that we are in a position to move faster and create a better investment climate. We are not the only ones. The majority of world nations are striving to attract local, regional, and international investment.

True, we are not on the point of entering a race or competing against other countries, but we need to take further courageous steps that are commensurate with the level of economic and social progress that Syria has attained in more than one area. Had we attempted to develop the investment climate gradually, year after year, the atmosphere today would be much better and would have maintained the momentum of the years 1991-92.

After every Higher Investment Council meeting, we are accustomed to reading about the scores of projects approved for licensing. But the council does not pause much afterward to consider the routine bureaucracy and legal problems that face these companies due to existing laws and regulations. So far, the government not taken a single step to amend or improve these laws and regulations or even cancel those that conflict with the nature and spirit of the investment law and climate!!

When we read that the Higher Investment Council approved licenses for 176 agricultural and industrial projects in 1994, it is important to ask: Why has only one of these projects actually been implemented in the year since the licenses were approved? True, the implementation rate was high in 1991 and 1992, but this rate has continued to deteriorate to just 4 percent in 1994.

What does this mean? Does it mean that it is time to reconsider the investment climate in Syria and be convinced that not a single courageous step has been taken since Law No. 10?

To help them serve the national economy properly, laws that organize investment need to be revised and modernized year after year in light of new developments. We have been saying since the investment law was issued that we must improve on this law to keep it vibrant, or cancel some existing laws and regulations, such as Law No. 24 on foreign exchange, the rent law, Law No. 60, and the law on buildings, etc.

More importantly, we done nothing to establish a stock exchange, despite the fact that a draft law for such a market has been in existence since 1992. If this market existed, the country would not have experienced the widespread phenomenon of money collectors [private investors using funds deposited by citizens]. A stock exchange also encourages the establishment of shareholding companies, which are a better means for investing the funds of small savers.

Since Law No. 10 was issued, we have also been talking about creating of an investment bank, but this bank has not seen the light of day. Not only should specialized investment banks be established, the operations of the entire banking system must be improved.

We must not forget the subject of industrial zones, a subject we have studied and discussed for so long that we have come to believe that the establishment of such zones, with their own essential services and utilities, is impossible.

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Afghanistan

Afghanistan: Huge Blast at Presidential Palace Arms Depot

BK1502164096 Hong Kong AFP in English 1624 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Feb 15 (AFP) — Up to 60 people were killed and scores injured in Kabul late Thursday when a huge blast at a munitions depot ripped through the war-torn city, defence and hospital officials said.

The massive explosion ripped through a munitions dump at the Presidential Palace in central Kabul in the late afternoon, shattering windows and scattered debris and shrapnel in a 500-meter (1,650-feet) radius around the palace.

Hospital staff said two people were killed and 25 admitted immediately after the blast, but Defence Ministry officials said they had seen up to 60 bodies lying in the presidential compound which is closed to reporters.

One official said most of the casualties were military personnel, but added that some civilians were also among the dead following what witnesses described as the strongest blast to rock Kabul in many years.

"It was like armageddon in the city centre," municipal worker Mohammed Azam told AFP.

"Everything was normal: the streets were busy, people were shopping in the bazaar and then suddenly there was the loudest blast I've ever heard," he said.

"The world had changed in an instant — there were injured people around me, glass everywhere and the sound of other small explosions in the air around me."

"It was terrifying because nobody knew whether it was a bombing raid, a series of rocket attacks or a huge car bomb," the 45-year- old said.

Most civilians in the nearby central bazaar fled the area, while soldiers and market stall holders cowered in gutters fearing being hit by shells or shrapnel still being spat out of the blast site.

Anti-aircraft shells, mortars, rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) and artillery shells continued to explode for more than two hours after the initial blast cast a huge, black pall of smoke over the city.

Mini-buses and cars passing by the palace were hurled into gutters by the force of the blast, while the contents of market stalls and anti-aircraft rounds lay scattered around the area.

The Presidential Palace, ministry buildings, banks and nearby hotels were seriously damaged in the explosion, witnesses said, but defence official said President Borhanoddin Rabbani was not in his office when it occurred.

Hospital workers said two civilians admitted after the initial blast were in a serious condition and were unlikely to survive the night.

The blast was triggered when an accidental fire near the depot raged out of control and triggered a deadly series of explosions in the ammunitions store itself, defence officials said.

"We lost a significant amount of ordnance in the blasts, but the loss will not have any major effect on our operations," a cadre said.

"It's unfortunate, but these things happen when a country is at war — munitions have to be stored somewhere and fires occur," he added.

Earlier the official said the explosion took place as soldiers were unloading a shipment of ammunition at the munitions dump in the western corner of the Presidential Palace.

He ruled out an air raid or rocket strike from the Taleban militia besieging Kabul as the cause of the blast, but said investigations were yet to be carried out.

He said the dump contained "all types" of ammunition, including mortars, bullets, tank and artillery shells, rockets, tracer rounds and RPGs.

Kabul's normally pitch black night sky was illuminated late Thursday by tracer bullets and other ordnance which continued exploding well after the first blast.

Afghanistan: 2d Explosion Hits Kabul; 'Over 180' Dead

LD1602104496 Moscow ITAR-TASS in English 1017 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] TEHERAN February 16 (Itar-Tass) — Another strong explosion shook central districts of the Afghan capital Kabul on the night from Thursday to Friday. Fire swept the buildings of the presidential palace and a nearby hotel. An ammunition depot in the palace exploded. Sixty people were killed and many wounded. Several hours after that there was another explosion. There are no reports about the damage it caused.

A representative of President Borhanoddin Rabbani said that the first explosion was caused by a fire resulting from a short circuit. The fire spread to an ammunition depot in the presidential palace.

As a result of the explosions a large number of items of unexploded ammunition scattered on a large area around

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the palace. According to unofficial information, more than 180 people were killed by the explosions in Kabul.

Afghanistan: 2 Kabul Residents Killed in Taleban Rocket Attacks

LD1502180996 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Last night and today the Benazir Bhutto Taleban launched rocket attacks against the residential areas of Kabul city. BAKHTAR reported that last night and today the Taleban fired 12 rockets as result of which two Kabul residents were martyred and eight others were injured. In addition, two residential houses were damaged.

Afghanistan: Taleban Units Reportedly Clash in Lowgar

LD1502211896 Tehran IRNA in English 2105 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Kabul, Feb. 15, IRNA — The forces under the command of two Taleban commanders reportedly battled each other using light and heavy weapons in Lowgar Province of Afghanistan Thursday with casualties to both sides. The situation in Lowgar Province is said to be critical with chances of still fresh encounters between factions within the Taleban militia.

Previous reports indicted the presence of three factions in Taleban, the first led by Molla Mohammad 'Omar who advocates peaceful negotiation, the second by Molla Burjan and Molla Ehsanollah who favour continuing war to topple President Borhanoddin Rabbani's government, and the third by Molla Mohammad Rabbani who favors a middle-of-the-road policy.

Afghanistan: FM Lafra'i Departs for Tehran

LD1502180096 Kabul Radio Afghanistan Network in Pashto 1530 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Esteemed Dr. Najibollah Lafra'i, minister of state for foreign affairs, left for the Islamic Republic of Iran this afternoon at the head of a high-ranking delegation at the invitation of Iranian Foreign Minister Mr. ['Ali Akbar] Velayati.

Esteemed 'Abdol 'Aziz Morad, head of the press office of the presidency, and Dr. 'Abdollah, the Defense Ministry spokesman, are members of the delegation.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh: Troops Clash With Antielection Protesters

BK1502135196 Hong Kong AFP in English 1332 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tongi, Bangladesh, Feb 15 (AFP) — Police clashed with 6,000 opposition supporters trying to disrupt the Bangladesh general election in the industrial town of Tongi on Thursday.

At least six people were injured in the three-and-a-half-hour clash as the activists hurled bombs and stones at police on a road leading to a polling station in the town, 30 kilometres (18 miles) from Dhaka.

Nazmul Haque, Tongi's police chief, said the crowd erected four blocks on a two-mile road between the Pubail and Majukhan areas and attacked police and paramilitary Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) vehicles escorting dignitaries to the nearby Kaliganj area for voting. "Three of our men were injured and one of them has been hospitalised in serious condition," Haque said, adding that "we had to open fire to make way and for safety."

Police said they plunged into the melee to try to clear a way for the officials but were hit by a volley of crude bombs and stones and had to call in the army, which responded with tear gas shells and rubber bullets.

A local businessman said the incident was one of the worst he had witnessed.

"It was the fiercest clash I have ever seen. When the army came, they too opened fire, hitting three activists."

Witnesses said many more people were injured in the violence.

Mokbul Hossain, a local butcher, said: "I was beaten up and army, police and BDR opened fire indiscriminately. But I had nothing to do with the attack. "

Bullet marks were seen on shop shutters and electric poles on the road, which was littered stones and bricks thrown by activists.

The small town lay eerily quiet after the incident with residents saying they would not go out for fear of further attacks.

They said security forces harassed villagers on both sides of the road through Kaliganj and arrested at least four suspected activists.

Violence linked to parliamentary elections claimed six lives across Bangladesh Thursday, a government spokesman said in Dhaka.

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The opposition had called a 48-hour "people's curfew" since Wednesday to foil the elections for Bangladesh's sixth parliament. It is demanding Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's resignation and refused to take part in the polls.

Bangladesh: Minister—6 Persons Dead in Election Violence

BK1502164296 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in Bengali 1500 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Elections for the sixth parliament was held in the country today. Polling in 250 constituencies was by and large peaceful, barring sporadic bomb blasts, the hijacking of election materials, and arson in some places.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas and Begum Biswas cast their votes at the Bangabhaban Primary School polling center. Prime Minister Khaleda Zia cast her vote at the Adamjee Cantonment College center, while Chief Election Commissioner Justice A.K.M. Sadeque cast his vote at the Uttara High School center. The chief election commissioner visited the polling centers at Viqarunnessa Noon High School, Siddeshwari High School, Shaheen College, Adamjee Cantonment College, and Bangladesh Institute of Technology in the capital. He was accompanied by Election Commissioner Justice Abdul Jalil.

In Dhaka, polling ended peacefully barring some sporadic explosion of fire crackers. Our Chittagong correspondent quoting the Election Control Center says polling in several places of this district was hampered by violent incidents. In Cox's Bazar, polling was held in two out of four constituencies. Apart from some minor incidents, polling was peaceful in Khulna, Rajshahi, Sylhet, Sunamganj, Habiganj, and Barisal. Speaker Sheikh Razzak Ali cast his vote in Khulna city. Our correspondents in Natore, Chuadanga, greater Mymensingh, Noagaon, and other districts have reported that polling was peaceful.

Vote counting is continuing at all polling centers. The Election Commission has already directed the Election Inquiry Committees in the 64 districts to observe the vote counting in their respective districts and to immediately inform the commission about any irregularity. It has already been announced that Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television will broadcast the first election results bulletin at 2330 tonight. It will continue till 1230 tomorrow. After a two-hour interval for Friday prayers tomorrow, Radio Bangladesh and Bangladesh Television will resume broadcasting the election results from 1430 to 1800. After this, radio and television will broadcast the remaining results in their scheduled bulletins.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, who is also the chairperson of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party [BNP], has applauded citizens for their spontaneous participation in the general elections. In a statement issued tonight, the prime minister conveyed her sincere felicitations to the people for displaying courage and resolution by taking part in the parliamentary elections to maintain the continuity of the constitutional and democratic process. She said democracy has been strengthened due to the correct decision taken by the people of the country.

Meanwhile, Professor A.Q.M. Badruddoza Chowdhury, who is a member of the BNP Standing Committee and former deputy leader of the house in parliament, has felicitated the people for taking part in the parliamentary elections today. Addressing a briefing session for foreign journalists in Dhaka this evening, Professor Chowdhury said we are very happy as a large number of people came to the polling centers to exercise their right of franchise, ignoring the threats and intimidation of some opposition parties.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Information and Commerce Mohammad Shamsul Islam said polling was smooth and peaceful in all except for 306 polling centers. He said polling was suspended in these centers for different reasons. The information minister added that six persons were killed in election violence in different parts of the country today. One each was killed in Chittagong, Madhukhali of Faridpur, Rajbari, Chuadanga, Birganj, and Barisal. He added that one BNP candidate was arrested today.

Bangladesh: Unofficial Election Results for 87 Seats

BK1602025096 Dhaka Radio Bangladesh Network in English 0200 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] The Election Commission has so far announced the unofficial results of 87 [words indistinct]. As already reported, 48 candidates were declared elected unopposed. With this, results of 135 are now available. In two constituencies, election was held [words indistinct]. [passage omitted giving names and constituencies of winning candidates, including Prime Minister Khaleda Zia]

All but one unofficially declared elected from BNP [Bangladesh Nationalist Party]. Lone candidate, S.M. Shafi Mahmud, was so far declared unofficially elected from Brahmanbaria-I as an independent candidate.

The chief election commissioner, Justice A.K.M. Sadeque, has termed the polling of the sixth parliamentary election concluded yesterday as generally peaceful.

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He was speaking at an impromptu press briefing at his secretariat last night. He, however, regretted boycott of election by some major political parties. Justice Sadeque made it categorically clear that those who refused to do their election duties will be [words indistinct] after proper inquiry. About allegation of electoral irregularities in some areas, the chief election commissioner said there will be serious (?investigation).

Bangladesh: Roundup of Election Results, Violence

BK1602033096 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 0245 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] In Bangladesh, the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party appears set for a clean sweep in the opposition- boycotted parliamentary elections. Election Commission sources indicate that out of 87 constituencies, counting of which has been completed, 86 have gone in favor of the ruling party and one to an independent. The prime minister, Begum Khaleda Zia, has already bagged three seats unopposed. Counting will continue this afternoon.

At least 15 people were killed and about 400 injured in poll- related violence yesterday. Reports of bomb blasts, snatching of ballot boxes, and violent clashes with the security forces have been received from several places. The polling was on a low key as most voters remained indoors. Chittagong, Madhukhali, Rajbari, Birganj, Chuadanga, and Barisal were the worst affected by violence.

[Hong Kong AFP in English at 0323 GMT on 16 February reports: "Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) predictably led in Thursday's opposition-boycotted polls, taking 129 of the 130 seats declared unofficially, election officials said Friday. Zia won from two of four constituencies she contested, an Election Commission official told AFP. Her party also won 128 other seats. The only exception in the early landslide trend was an independent candidate from the western Brahmanbaria constituency, he said. Results from the remaining areas are expected by Friday. Polling in the opposition-rejected elections was held in 249 of the total 300 constituencies. Fifty BNP contestants had unofficially been elected unopposed and in one seat voting was cancelled earlier due to the death of a candidate. With 129 wins and 50 unopposed victories, the ruling BNP has so far bagged 179 seats."]

Bangladesh: Opposition—Polls Rigged; Calls for Complete Shutdown

BK1602125196 Hong Kong AFP in English 1225 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] DHAKA, Feb 16 (AFP) — Bangladesh's main opposition leader Sheikh Hasina Wajed called Friday for a nationwide three-day shutdown next week to force the downfall of the government.

The call came during a rally of her Awami League in Dhaka, one day after general elections which she said were "rigged." Opposition parties boycotted the election.

She said all all government office, schools and communications should halt for three days in a "non-cooperation movement to force the illegal government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to resign." The shutdown would start February 24.

Thousands of cheering supporters, ringed by security forces, attended the rally.

Wajed said the general election had been a "sham" with widespread irregularities. She accused the election commission of becoming a "vote rigging factory."

Wajed declared that the opposition campaign had been "100 percent successful" in disrupting the election. Polls official said Zia was heading for a landslide victory with an overwhelming majority in the new parliament.

Bangladesh: BNP Wins 151 of 152 Seats to Date

BK1602130696 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party [BNP] is poised to sweep the polls in the country's parliamentary elections held yesterday. Of the 152 results available so far, the ruling party has bagged 151. Major opposition parties have boycotted the polls saying that the election would not be free and fair under the government led by Begum Khaleda Zia.

India

India: Navy Denies Involvement in LTTE Arms Vessel Raid

BK1602093996 Hong Kong AFP in English 0921 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] NEW DELHI, Feb 16 (AFP) — The Indian navy denied on Friday [9 February] that any of its ships participated in an attack by the Sri Lankan navy on a flotilla carrying weapons for the Tamil separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

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In a statement, the navy said "the attention of the naval headquarters has been drawn to a news report suggesting that two Indian naval ships were involved in a recent action against LTTE ships reportedly carrying arms. "The naval headquarters would like to categorically deny any association or involvement in this incident."

Sri Lankan military officials also denied that the Indian navy was involved in the attack on the Tamil rebel arms ship. The Tamil Tigers claimed that two Indian ships joined the Sri Lankan navy in destroying an arms ship on Wednesday off the northeast coast.

In a statement issued Friday by its London office, the LTTE said two Indian navy craft "played an important role" in the attack which left five Tigers dead. The Tiger flotilla was on its way to attack navy ships in the port of Trincomalee when it was attacked, the statement said.

According to the defence ministry in Colombo, the Tiger guerrillas were unloading arms and ammunition onto five smaller boats at sea to be brought ashore and taken to territory held by the LTTE. It was not clear from where the Tiger ship had originated. The guerrillas are known to operate a fleet of ships registered in the names of dummy companies.

Fourteen months ago, there were reports in Colombo that the LTTE had arranged the purchase of 30 tonnes of military supplies, including plastic explosives known as RDX, and was trying to smuggle it in to the country. In January 1993, an LTTE arms ship, the MV Ahad, was intercepted by the Indian navy off Sri Lanka's northern coast. Since then, the Indian navy has stepped up patrols in the narrow Palk Straits dividing the two Indian Ocean nations in a bid to prevent Tiger guerrillas slipping in and out of the island republic.

The Tigers are leading a guerrilla campaign to establish an independent homeland in Sri Lanka's northeast where the two million Tamil minority is concentrated.

India: Embassy Denies Navy's Role in Sinking of LTTE Ship

BK1602130596 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] India has categorically denied any involvement of its Navy in the recent sinking of a ship reportedly carrying arms and ammunition for the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] off Mullaitivu in the eastern coast of Sri Lanka. A spokesman of the Indian High Commission in Colombo described the report as baseless. Earlier, the Sri Lankan Navy had also said that no Indian naval craft was involved in the incident.

India: Poll Shows 'Third Force' Supports Basu for PM

BK1502132596 Delhi FINANCIAL EXPRESS (FE ON SATURDAY Supplement) in English 10 Feb 96 p I

[Unattributed article]

[FBIS Transcribed Excerpt] [passage omitted] A survey carried out by the Centre for Media Studies for the Financial Express has established the preference for Jyoti Basu as the prime ministerial candidate of the Third Force—the alternative to the Congress and the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. The survey was conducted between January 24 and February 2, 1996, in 10 locations in Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow and Thiruvananthapuram, among 1,736 "informed urban voters". Among the people contacted during the survey, 35.5 per cent picked Basu as their choice for the most suitable National Front/Left Front candidate for prime ministership. V P Singh still retains credibility among the people, but Basu's case was strengthened by Singh's temporary retirement from politics.

The poll also found that the Marxist patriarch was perceived to be a better leader than most other toprankers, including B V Narasimha Rao, L K Advani and V P Singh. The respondents felt that only Atal Behari Vajpayee was a better leader than Basu.

Surprisingly, the octogenarian Marxist fared better than Narasimha Rao on several attributes. He was rated better than Rao on personal honesty, administrative efficiency, maintenance of law and order, securing communal harmony and in checking

India: Poll Shows Urban Voters Support BJP in Elections

BK1602123796 Delhi FINANCIAL EXPRESS in English 9 Feb 96 p I

[Report by FE News Service]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] There is an alternative to the Congress party at the Centre. And voters in urban India are convinced it is the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party]. Congress is perceived to be the most corrupt national party: action taken by the present government in the hawala [illegal money transfer] case was merely a political stunt. The NF/LF [National Front-Left Front] lack credibility in the eyes of the public. So BJP is deemed best suited to form the government at the Centre. Atal Behari Vajpayee emerges as the popular choice for PM [prime minister], followed by PV Narasimha Rao with much less support. Should the Third Front form the government, Jyoti Basu is ahead of the others for the PM's post.

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These are the highlights of an opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Media Studies [CMS] for Financial Express [FE]. The sample covered over 1700 informed urban voters from 10 major cities: Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, Bangalore, Hyderabad, Ahmedabad, Jaipur, Lucknow, and Thiruvananthapuram.

The FE-CMS poll sought voters' opinions on a number of crucial issues, including

— which party is the best suited to form the government at the Centre:

— who is the best candidate for Prime Minister;

— which is the most corrupt, alternately, least corrupt party;

— action taken on Hawala case:

— entry of MNC's [multinational corporations] into low-tech sectors and

— perception about government's economic policies.

The poll results decisively explode the myth of the TINA factor (there is no alternative) in national politics. An electorate that has been resigned to the sorry fate of a Congress Government at the Centre for decades is now getting wise. It has realised that BJP is well placed to offer the best government at the Centre: almost 40 per cent voters all over India think so.

Voters now have an either-or attitude towards Congress and BJP when they talk of who should form the Government. The other parties, like NF/LF, do not have a significant place in the fray. Only a tenth of the sample votes are in favour of the Third Front. In the aftermath of the hawala scandal, Congress has slipped down in public perception and is now only a strong contender to BJP, especially since it gained the reputation of being the most corrupt party.

Region-wise, the results are even more interesting. BJP wins hands down in the North, with three times as many people voting for it compared to Congress as the best party to form the Government. If Congress stands decimated in the North, its position is none too strong in the South either, where less than half the voters find it suitable to manage the affairs of the country. BJP, meanwhile, seems to be creeping up on traditional Congress territory. In the South, 22 per cent of the votes in BJP's favour speak well for it compared to NF/LF's 18 per cent.

There is a clear majority for BJP in the West too while in the East, Congress is ahead, though not by a comfortable margin. With the North and West accounting for nearly three-fourths of the seats needed to form the government at the Centre, BJP looks set to storm the bastion. Only about 32 per cent of the all-India sample votes are for the Congress—it is no longer the only national party in people's minds.

Part of the explanation for Congress poor ratings on the national popularity scene is also the reason why BJP is getting more focus as a national party. All the usual factors that made Congress seem unshakeable as the ruling party are now working in BJP's favour. Congress as a strong, stable party has collapse—the Narasimha faction versus the Arjun faction versus the Sonia faction... the Congress's political philosophy of yesteryears is getting dismantled beyond recognition now.

In contrast is the organised, cohesive, cadre-based structure of the BJP, bolstered by RSS [Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh] support. The Congress edifice has crumbled: BJP and CPM [Communist Party-Marxist] have retained their ideological cohesion. The Gujarat fiasco, infighting, and even corruption charges against the top leadership haven't made much of a dent in urban voters' preference for BJP. The people's mandate has thrown up BJP as a truly viable national alternative. This is TINA by another name, with the N for national this time!

When voters look for changes in the party they want at the Centre, can a change of prime minister be far behind? The decisive 38 per cent votes take Vajpayee all the way to the coveted PM's chair in people's perception, just as they have voted his party the most suitable to run the government. The Congress party has always survived on the basis of a winnable slogan and a charismatic leader. At the moment, they have neither: Narasimha Rao gets a paltry 24 per cent of the votes for best PM in the CMS-FE poll.

There is no central issue in sight on which Congress can pin its election campaign, and its leaders seem to have disappeared with the death of Indira and Rajiv Gandhi. Rao was till recently only among the backbenchers in the Congress and public perception of his leadership qualities has not improved to date. Rao scores just as high (or low) in the East and West as his national average of a little over 20 per cent votes.

In this regard, VP Singh has done fairly well despite being out of the media focus he has retained his place in voters' minds. With nearly ten per cent of the sample voters finding him eligible as PM, he almost pips LK Advani to the post for third place, though the latter gets more front page coverage as a national leader. Advani has lower popularity in the South where Vajpayee and VP Singh are close second best contenders for PM. Thanks to Southern goodwill, Rao predictably leads them by a big margin.

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In the regions they come from, both Rao and Jyoti Basu have higher popularity ratings for the PM compared to other regions. However, even this is not enough to make either of them the best choice for prime ministership all across the country. AB Vajpayee leads in all regions except the South, and thus gets the honour of the people's choice for best PM. What was predicted about Vajpayee back in 1967 (when he was with the Jan Sangh) may well come true now.

India: Faction Rivalry Said To Mar Congress' Election Prospects

BK1602100096 Delhi OUTLOOK in English 14 Feb 96 p 18

[Article by Ashis K. Biswas: "Divided Moves"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] It is the same depressing pattern for the Congress in West Bengal. As the party braces itself for the coming general elections, the rivalry between the feisty Mamata Banerjee, the only party leader with an established mass following, and Somen Mitra, the state party president credited with steering his followers through some difficult times, threatens to override their combined hatred of the ruling CPI(M) [Communist Party of India-Marxist]. Recent interviews with prominent leaders in both camps revealed that each would rather blame the other first, and then the CPI(M)'S alleged "terror tactics and electoral rigging", if the Congress failed to post a victory in the polls.

Ironically, the Congress is the closest it has ever been to pulling off a major electoral coup and there's little doubt that the ruling Left Front faces its stiffest challenge in 1996 in the state it has ruled undisturbed for 18 years. Pointing to the Congress' favourable prospects, a professor of political science in Calcutta University says: "The number of warring factions within the major opposition party is down to only two, from three or four groups earlier. And the BJP [Bharatiya Janata Party], which picked up 11.47 per cent of the total votes polled in 1991, should not be able to win more than 5 to 6 per cent if the recent civic and panchayat polls are any indication. In 1991, the BJP had made the Congress defeat easier by influencing its candidates' chances in 30 assembly seats, which would otherwise have given the Congress a respectable tally of 73 seats in a house of 294, as against the 43 it eventually won. And as far as the Left goes, senior leaders like Nripen Chakravarty and Benoy Choudhury have criticised their own party publicly. Conditions look tailor-made for the Opposition in 1996."

Encouraging words for a party which has remained politically subdued for 18 years in West Bengal. Its tally in the assembly has fluctuated between 20 and 43 seats in the course of four elections, even though it has consistently managed to win between 35 and 42 per cent of the total votes polled. The bane of the party has been its chronic inability to translate political support into sizeable legislative presence. Personal bickerings and sellouts to the ruling Front have combined to land the party in a position where it has failed to live up to expectations.

With elections at hand, prominent Congressmen are engaged in analysing their prospects. Dr Zainal Abedin, veteran leader of the legislative party, and Saugata Ray, who has the best track record in the assembly, do not share their supporters' optimism about their prospects. Ray, who sympathises with Banerjee, says: "If people think the situation is better because there are only two factions instead of more, I don't agree. The PCC [Pradesh Congress Committee] will not let too many of our men secure assembly poll nominations, going by our experience prior to the 1995 civic polls. They cannot stomach the popular support our people enjoy. After all, Banerjee's massive January rally where the Prime Minister was present, was a landmark for the party. The Front may be on the ropes this time, but I can't think in terms of victory yet."

Abedin, who aligns with the PCC chief Mitra, counters: "The other side is full of ambitious people who do not shoulder the rigours of party organisational work. How can we nominate people on their recommendation? From west Dinajpur to Burdwan, I can give you examples where we lost safe seats because we accepted their people. Sometimes they recommend tickets even for criminals. A united party could turn the tables against the Front this time, but I don't see any signs of that happening."

If anything, the attempted re-entry of Union minister Pranab Mukheree and former chief minister S.S. Ray has created further confusion in the party ranks. Their return has not been generally welcomed, although Mukherjee seems better placed in the run-up to the polls than S.S. Ray. He enjoys the support of the PCC, and Abedin recalls with gratitude his financial help to the organisation during the panchayat polls in 1993, where the Congress won more mass support than before and resulted in a 20 per cent loss of popular support for the Left, as well as the civic polls where the party wrested control of 32 civic bodies out of 127. But the AICC [All India Congress Committee] hardly took notice, leaving both camps disillusioned with the high command. "Why Delhi never intervenes is a mystery, even though our party enjoys more mass support here than it does in Uttar Pradesh or Bihar," complain Abedin and Saugata Ray.

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Unfortunately, both S.S. Ray, who last won an election in 1972, and Mukherjee, who has yet to win a Lok Sabha seat, are better known for their affiliation with the central leadership than with the state unit. In the common perception, let alone the CPI(M)'s, both men have carried out policies against West Bengal's interests, on orders from above. S.S. Ray's tenure is infamous for the open season declared by the police on opposition workers from 1972 to 1977, while Mukherjee is associated with the decision to withhold a Rs [rupees] 325 crore special assistance to West Bengal, despite a recommendation from the Finance Commission. Mukherjee, according to his confidants, would naturally like to lead the state Congress as would S.S. Ray, which would pit the two against each other. S.S. Ray has nestled closer to the Banerjee camp. In short, neither has been able to rise above petty factionalism. And until they do, their dream to rule their native state will remain just that.

India: Militants Threaten To Sabotage Kashmir Polls

BK1602150096 Hong Kong AFP in English 1441 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Srinagar, India Feb 16 (AFP) — A militant group Friday [16 February] vowed to sabotage elections in Kashmir and said India, Pakistan and representatives of the troubled state should hold talks to find a solution to the dispute.

"Bilateral talks have never yielded any results so far and hence there is a need for tripartite talks," said Umar (eds: one word), chairman of the Freedom Conference, an umbrella organisation of 24 militant outfits. New Delhi holds the southern two-thirds of Kashmir and Islamabad the rest, which it refers to as Azad Kashmir (Free Kashmir).

Umar said if New Delhi decided to hold polls in Kashmir then it would have to take up the responsibility of "increased violence in the state." "We will sabotage all the election moves in Kashmir," he told thousands of Muslims gathered at the main mosque here to offer last Friday prayers of Ramadhan.

Last November, India's Election Commission rejected Prime Minister Narasimha Rao's recommendations for elections in Kashmir by mid-December saying the situation in the frontier Himalayan province was no@ conducive to free elections. The opposition parties, mainly the Communist Party of India and its Marxist allies shot down the government's plan to hold elections in Kashmir at an all-party meeting on February 4 to discuss elections in Kashmir.

The regional National Conference came to power with Congress after the last elections were held in Kashmir in 1987 which Muslim political groups allege were rigged. Kashmiris have voted seven times to elect provincial governments since 1962, with voter turnouts at polling stations reaching as much as 75 percent in 1987.

India: 'Pakistan-Trained Militant' Arrested

BK1602134396 Delhi All India Radio Network in English 1230 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The Delhi police have arrested another Pakistan-trained militant who was staying in the capital as an upper dealer. During interrogation, the militant disclosed that he participated in attacks on Indian Army camps at village Imam Saheb in the Kashmir Valley and was also involved in the kidnapping of a rival militant group leader.

Iran

Iran: Judiciary Chief Discusses Human Rights With UN Envoy

LD1502164896 Tehran IRIB Television First Program Network in Persian 1530 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] The head of the judiciary today met Mr. [Maurice Danby] Copithorne, the UN special envoy, and expressed the hope that the report on his visit to Iran would reflect the realities about full and precise compliance with human rights in Iran.

Ayatollah Yazdi described the Islamic Republic of Iran's judicial system and said some of the distinctions of this system were the speed in dealing with legal cases, the proportionality of the punishment with the crime, and also the equality of every one before the law.

The head of the judiciary said the unique features of the system after the revolution included the speed in implementing justice, the rule of the law, and also the creation of social conventions based on principled and legal foundations. He said: The dictum of adherence to laws is the pivot of all affairs in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Ayatollah Yazdi explained: From our viewpoint, all issues posed in the statements of foreign groups and forums regarding the human rights situation in Iran — which create certain insinuations in people's minds — have no legal validity.

The head of the judiciary, furthermore, referred to the issue of Iranian living abroad and said all Iranian residing in foreign countries can return to Iran if they have not committed a crime before or after the revolution.

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Iran: Yazdi Meets With UN's Copithorne

LD1502194396 Tehran IRNA in English 1924 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 15, IRNA — Head of the Judiciary Ayatollah Mohammad Yazdi here Thursday told the visiting Canadian rapporteur of the U.N. Human Rights Commission, Maurice Danby Copithorne, that he expected him to demonstrate sincerity and neutrality in drawing up reports to the the world body. Ayatollah Yazdi said that hostile and biased international media had filed contradictory reports about the status of the human rights in Iran which, he said, were not worth reacting to by the Iranian government.

He said the Islamic government maintained the right to be responsive only to internationally recognized authorities in that respect. The head of the judiciary said that as the result of reforming the justice administration in Iran litigations and judiciary proceedings were handled more justly and more rapidly.

Referring to the attitude of the Iranian government towards foreign-based Iranians he said all nationals of Iran not being guilty of any crime could choose to return home with pledge of safe conduct.

Iran: UN's Envoy Hails 'Excellent' Cooperation

LD1502230296 Tehran IRNA in English 2240 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 15, IRNA — United Nations human rights rapporteur Maurice Danby Copithorne on Thursday implicitly acknowledged the silence of international circles during the time of the shah, and said "I think that the decision for selecting a special rapporteur is usually a political one and is basically connected to the political trend of the human rights commission."

Copithorne, before leaving Iran for Geneva, summed up as "excellent" the cooperation of Iranian authorities regarding human rights issues, and said: "I am satisfied with my inspection visit to prisons and have collected enough information." He did not make any comment on the U.S. decision to finance subversive acts against the Islamic republic with a dlrs. 20 billion budget.

On the outcome of his report, the Canadian professor, said that it will be made known sometime in April after being officially presented to the United Nations [General] Assembly.

During his 6-day stay in Iran, Copithorne met senior judiciary and executive officials.

Iran: U.S. Senator 'Spearheading' Efforts To Punish Investment

LD1502174196 Tehran IRNA in English 1126 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] London, Feb. 15, IRNA — In his latest anti-Iran outburst, U.S. Senator Al D'Amato has turned his attention to attack Chancellor Helmut Kohl for giving "preferential treatment" in rescheduling Tehran's dlrs. 5.6 billion debt with Germany.

He was quoted by the FINANCIAL TIMES newspaper Thursday to have accused Bonn of "granting a subsidy" by setting a 5 to 7 per cent risk premium rather than 12 per cent that was said to be prescribed by a borrower of Iran's credit rating.

This practices will lead to the creation of an "uncontrollable Iranian military threat," the Senate Banking Committee chairman was said to have claimed.

D'Amato has been spearheading congressional efforts to punish non-U.S. firms for investing in Iran's oil development following his failure last year to win any international support, apart from Israel, for President Clinton's unilateral sanctions.

In a desperate bid last week, he was reported to have attempted to blackmail Australia's largest company, BHP, by writing to its chairman threatening retroactive measures if it proceeded to sign a deal to build a gas pipeline between Iran and Pakistan.

Iran: Tehran Ready for 'Friendly Ties' if U.S. Ends 'Plots'

NC1502195196 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 10 Feb 96 pp 2, 15

[Editorial: "U.S.-Iran Relations After 17 Years"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Speaking on the anniversary of the victory of Islamic Revolution, President Akbar Hashemi-Rafsanjani once again reiterated that Iran would neither restore relations with the United States, nor will it establish relations with the Zionist regime.

However, as the president has indicated, Iran prefers to have friendly ties with every member of the world community. Since its victory, the Islamic Revolution has based the foundations of its foreign policy on friendly ties with all countries except with the Zionist regime. Iranian officials, nevertheless, have several times said that Tehran is ready to have friendly ties with the U.S. provided Washington stopped its anti-Iran plots and recognized the values and ideals of the Islamic Revolution.

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Unfortunately, the White House's miscalculation, since the collapse of the monarchical system in Iran, has been the main hindrance in the way of a feasible U.S. foreign policy towards Iran.

After the collapse of monarchy, instead of trying to understand the ideals and values of the Islamic Revolution, the United States resorted to hatching conspiracies against the nascent Islamic system. Miscalculations have always worked as the biggest hurdle in the way of U.S. anti-Iran plots. Jimmy Carter tried to topple the Islamic government through sponsoring coups, direct invasion and proxy war—ironically the proxy war was spearheaded by the leftists and the terrorist Mojahedin-e Khalq Organization (MKO), and the pro-Shah groups, all united in a single anti-revolution front. Even some analysts believe that it was the Carter Administration that gave a green signal to Saddam Husayn to invade Iran in September 1980. But none of those plots worked because the Islamic government have been enjoying the support of the masses.

Ronald Wilson Reagan and George Bush continued some of the policies of their predecessors besides adopting new anti-Iran measures in order to overthrow the government in Tehran [sentence as published]. Bill Clinton has proved more naive compared to his predecessors. Fortunately all American presidents since 1979 till date have landed in fiasco in dealing with mighty Iran.

The Revolution enters its 18th year tomorrow. This is high time the U.S. realizes that confrontation with mighty Iran does not work. The U.S. must change its attitude towards Islamic Iran to pave the way for a fair rapprochement. Iran would not compromise its principles because it is strong enough to defend them. Washington should take the first initiative by showing its goodwill: stop interfering in Iran's affairs, deal with Iran as a sovereign, independent state, stop supporting anti-Iran terrorist groups, waive sanctions, return the frozen Iranian assets, and stop conspiracies against Iran. After the U.S. has proved its goodwill, Iran can study a rapprochement.

Iran: 'Huge Financial Aid' Said Promised to Farrakhan

MM1502142496 London AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT in Arabic 15 Feb 96 p 6

[Unattributed report: "Tehran Supports Louis Farrakhan's Efforts To Move Its Battle Against 'Great Satan' to Washington"]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Tehran, London, AL-SHARQ AL-AWSAT — Sources in Tehran said yesterday that Iranian revolutionary establishments have promised to provide huge financial aid to a group of U.S. Muslims pledging to "move the battle against the Great Satan to the heart of Washington."

Ayatollah Hasan Sani, chairman of the 5 June Foundation, promised to provide aid to the Nation of Islam movement, led by Louis Farrakhan. Similar promises have been made by the Martyr Foundation, the Foundation for the Deprived, and the Imam Khomeyni Foundation. However, the Iranian sources denied previous reports of pledges to provide billions of dollars to black Muslims in the United States. A high-ranking source said: "Such figures are out of the question."

The Iranian Government has allocated $18 million to support the groups hostile toward the United States. Various Iranian establishments have spent huge sums of money on efforts to export the revolution. But it is unlikely that they will have the money needed to finance the black Muslims' operations on the scale Farrakhan is seeking.

Farrakhan visited Iran at the invitation of President Hashemi-Rafsanjani, who received him the way he receives head of states. And Farrakhan addressed the Iranian parliament — an honor no one else has enjoyed, even Iran's closest allies such as Syrian President Hafiz al-Asad. [passage omitted]

Iran: State Department Comment on Farrakhan Visit Criticized

LD1502142096 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran First Program Network in Persian 1104 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] As you have heard in this morning's news bulletins, the American Government has once again resorted to a reactionary move and expressed its fear and dismay about the justice-seeking movements of the country's blacks. It has responded to expectations of the Zionist circles by condemning the foreign visits of the leader of the American black community.

A spokesman of the U.S. State Department has strongly criticized Louis Farrakhan, the anti-Zionist leader of the American blacks, calling his visit to Iran shameful and referring to the talks between Farrakhan and our country's officials as an unforgivable action.

There is no doubt that instead of resolving the problems facing the U.S. Government, the U.S. State Department policy will cause more problems for Washington's authorities. Of course it is possible that the American policy will please the Zionist pressure groups because it exerts pressure on and restricts the movements of the American blacks.

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On the whole, however, this action will not serve Washington's interests at the present juncture, because, condemning the visits of a black leader of an Islamic Ummah group to other countries more than anything else renders questionable the trips and meetings of U.S. government officials and also renders abominable the meetings and negotiations of Washington authorities with rulers and presidents for life, who rely on despotic systems and lack legislative council. It is natural that henceforth, the blacks and other American people will have the right to protest strongly against visits of Washington officials to the occupied territories and to express their severe opposition against the fact that the American Government has ties with the Tel Aviv regime, which has openly ignored over 40 UN resolutions.

Of course, the American blacks at present strongly object to the several billions in loans and annual aid granted to the Zionist regime. That is why, in their slogans in American circles, they call the Zionists the bloodsuckers of the poor people of America.

Before making any accusations against individuals or countries, the U.S. State Department should think about the activities and actions of America's foreign apparatus and answer questions about the support of that Department and the American Government for Tel Aviv while it has not withdrawn from the occupied Golan territory. Also, it should explain the reasons for granting loans and grant-in- aid to the Zionist regime, while it has not yet paid compensation to Palestinians for 28 years of occupation of the West Bank cities.

It is obvious that the American Government itself is considered the greatest culprit in this matter, and therefore cannot prevent its citizens from travelling to those countries which are not considered suitable by the Washington authorities. Of course, the American Government should give another clear answer to that country's blacks and explain plainly the reasons for granting huge loans to the Zionist regime at a time when the American people are living under hard conditions.

Iran: Commentary on 'Tough' U.S. Reaction To Farrakhan's Visit

LD1502184696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in English 1530 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Unattributed commentary]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The U.S. State Department spokesman, Nicholas Burns, has described the visit of the leader of the American black Muslim Louis Farrakhan to Iran and Libya as a shame. Burns has also said that Washington carefully pursues the press reports concerning Farrakhan's visit to Africa and the Middle East. He stressed the point that an American religious leader and citizen's praise of the Iranian and Libyan officials is a disgrace.

From the point of view of political experts, the tough reaction of the U.S. State Department comes as a result of expression of a series of facts and realities existing in the world viewed by an American citizen. During his four day stay in Tehran, Mr. Louis Farrakhan met and conferred with a number of the Iranian officials and also delivered a speech at the ceremonies marking the 17th anniversary of the victory of the Islamic revolution of Iran. The leader of the American blacks, in this speech, named the United States as the Great Satan and called for the unity of world Muslims in order to free themselves from the clutches of world imperialism.

Mr. Burns, in his turn, has named the Islamic Republic of Iran as a pro-terrorism regime. Apparently the spokesman of the U.S. State Department has forgotten the fact that the agent responsible for many crimes in Iran has been the U.S. Government. Downing of the Iranian passenger plane over the Persian Gulf waters, where 298 passengers of the plane were martyred, or the recent measure by the White House in allocating $20 million for sabotage purposes inside Iran are just two example out of hundreds of practical U.S. conspiracies against the Islamic Republic of Iran.

But the measure most shameful is the United States support for the Zionist regime, a regime whose hands are soaked with the blood of thousands of Palestinian youths who want to free their country from the occupation of the Zionists.

At any rate, the U.S. State Department's tough reaction indicates that Washington is preparing to toughly treat and approach Farrakhan. However, Mr. Louis Farrakhan, the leader of American black Muslims, too, has predicted that upon arrival in the United States he will be arrested under any excuses.

Iran: Commentary on Possible Pipeline Through Iran

NC1502164596 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Turkish 1630 GMT 13 Feb 96

[Unattributed commentary: "Talks Between President Demirel and President Niyazov"]

[FBIS Translated Text] Turkmen President Saparmurad Niyazov held official talks with President Suleyman Demirel in Ankara yesterday. Niyazov had visited Istanbul before beginning his official visit to Ankara. It is reported that the most important item on their agenda was the transfer of Turkmenistan's natural gas to Turkey via Iran. Experts say that the pipeline that

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will be constructed to transfer Turkmenistan's natural gas to Turkey and other countries is a vital project for Ashgabat. They also say that Turkmenistan will be able to resolve its economic problems and achieve development through its natural gas sales.

That is why Turkmenistan prefers to construct a pipeline through Iran. Obviously, it will be cheaper to transfer natural gas to the international markets. The Central Asian republics can also use Iran to market their products to Western countries. Transiting Iran is safe and economic.

The talks on the construction of a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Turkey through Iran began in May 1995. The project was delayed because of pressure from Washington and several financial circles. However, several Western countries have been strongly criticized internationally for their interference in international trade.

President Niyazov is calling for the realization of the pipeline project, which will serve the interests of the three countries. He urged the Turkish Government to focus more attention and adopt an active approach to the project.

Considering international economic policies, many political experts have agreed that countries in the region must promote their trade, economic, and other relations. Turkey, Iran, and Turkmenistan can effectively cooperate in using their potential resources to improve their trade and economic relations within the Economic Cooperation Organization's framework. Undoubtedly, the trade and economic cooperation between the regional countries will facilitate their cooperation in other fields. However, they have to maintain sincere and realistic policies and not be swayed by foreign interference if that is to be realized.

Iran: Daily Cited on Arrest of Islamic Figures in Turkey

NC1502154696 Tehran Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Turkish 1630 GMT 14 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Turkish security forces have arrested 300 people in various parts of the country during the past three days for involvement in Islamic activities.

Daily AKIS, published in Istanbul, reported today that 300 prominent Islamic figures were arrested by the security forces during wide scale operations carried out in Diyarbakir, Bingol, and Batman. The newspaper said that no reason has been given for their arrest and noted that their relatives are worried about their fate. The newspaper also said that the relatives have called for their immediate release.

Turkish security forces have recently launched wide scale operations to identity and arrest members of Islamic groups and organizations, particularly in southeastern Turkey.

Iran: Arab States Said Planning 'Army' Against Bahrain Islamists

NC1602105296 Tehran RESALAT in Persian 30 Jan 96 p 20

[Commentary by Heshmatollah Falahatpisheh: "The Mobilization of Reaction in Bahrain"]

[FBIS Translated Text] The Lebanese weekly AL-KIFAH AL-'ARABI announced in its latest issue that the Bahraini Government and some other regimes are implementing a plan to form a 50,000-strong Arab army to crush the Islamic movement in Bahrain. This plan has not yet materialized. But the truth is that if deemed necessary by governments like Bahrain, which seek absolute power, a common suppressive army will be formed. Such governments are based on two common pillars that bring them politically close together:

1. Monarchical despotism.
2. Reliance on forces that safeguard foreigners and crush genuine domestic movements.

These two principles give them a common fate, and if one of these pillars weakens in any one of the despotic governments, the political life of these despots will also be threatened.

Under these conditions, the Bahraini nation's reformist movement is a common threat to all those governments that continue to ignore the demands for the people's political participation. Therefore, it is only natural for these governments to cooperate in choosing deterrent policies so that they can continue to exist through false legitimacy. And when Manama attributes the uprising of protesters at home to foreign sources, it is joined in unison with regimes similar to it which also extend their moral and practical support to any suppressive measure Manama takes.

Reformist and revolutionary thoughts and steps are dynamic and contagious phenomena that act as cures for the crises that stem from the absence of political participation and of political legitimacy in absolutist systems. And the best places for these reformist and revolutionary ideas to spread are in systems similar to Bahrain's. Therefore, in order to avoid danger, the region's governments want to quarantine this reformist and revolutionary movement within Bahrain's borders

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and then to step up suppressive measures. But can the mobilization of reaction harness such ideas?

The truth is that revolutionary thought is not limited only to Bahrain. It exists in all the traditional despotic regimes like cinders under ashes. The fire has now started in Bahrain and this movement cannot be quarantined. Also, at a time when most nations have rejected traditional despotism, a considerable number of Arab governments insist on maintaining their paternalistic and traditional political systems. Some of them have created foreign support for domestic despotism. Many of the regional crises and, as a result, foreign presence, is the outcome of the reactionary leaders' fear for their own political fate. This longstanding fear has led to the maintainance of crises in the region. Undoubtedly, if the people's demands win over the traditional reactionaries, this will both solve all the domestic problems in these countries and result in longlasting tranquility and regional cooperation.

Iran: Borujerdi Discusses Tehran's Stand on Kashmir

NC1602122396 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 7 Feb 96 pp 1, 14

[Report by TEHRAN TIMES Service]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran — The Deputy Foreign Minister for Asia-Oceanic Affairs, Ala'eddin Borujerdi expressed Tehran's deep concern over the tension recently flared up between India and Pakistan over Kashmir.

In an exclusive interview with the TEHRAN TIMES, Borujerdi stressed that no one will benefit from the crisis and that it will only lead to killing of innocent people.

The chronic issue between Islamabad and New-Delhi has intensified since January 26, 1996 when two rockets hit the Kashmiri village of Khota in Pakistan-ruled part of Kashmir.

Iran has always announced its readiness to mediate between the two countries and is awaiting response from the two parties in this regard, Borujerdi said.

The issue of the Babri Mosque of India has once again come to the fore on the eve of Parliamentary elections in India. Asked to elaborate on the reasons, Borujerdi said, from the very beginning Tehran has denounced demolition of the mosque.

Iran considered annihilation of the mosque as a symbol of the escalation of religious and ethnical clashes in India, he stressed. Extremist Hindus destroyed the historic Babri Mosque on December 6, 1992. India's ruling party, the Congress (I), has unofficially apologized for the bitter incident. Reconstruction of the mosque and apology will help removal of certain difficulties, he stressed.

He further said that the Indian government which itself denounced the move should waste no time and try to redress the bruised feelings of Muslims.

Asked about Tehran's stance on nuclear activities of the two countries, Borujerdi expressed concern over the arms race in the region. He stressed that Iran was always for declaring the region a nuclear weapon's free zone.

Iran opposes any kind of arms race and maintains that the race could turn the region into a potential troublespot, he concluded.

Iran: Velayati Assails Palestinian Self-Rule Plan

LD1502221696 Tehran IRIB Television Second Program Network in Persian 1945 GMT 15 Feb 96

[Studio interview with Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati by unidentifed correspondent in the weekly political roundtable on 15 February — live or recorded]

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] [passage omitted] [Correspondent] How do you analyze the objectives of the recent transfer of the self-rule areas to the PLO? That is to say did the move seek to further limit the Palestinians, or did it have other aims?

[Velayati] If the intifadah had continued in the same manner, then more and more inhabitants of the occupied territories would have gradually joined Islamic formations such as Hamas [Islamic Resistance Movement] and Islamic Jihad, which in turn would have led to the further weakening of the PLO. Even among the higher echelons of the PLO, certain disputes had been surfacing because some ranks did not accept the process of peace and compromise with Israel.

The Israelis chose the self-rule administration, or in other words the PLO, for negotiations because they wanted to pretend that they have given something to the Palestinians, and they wanted to do this through the catalyst of the PLO. In reality, the Gaza and West Bank self-rule plan is aimed at building prisons, with or without barbed wire, for the Palestinians. In other words, they are to be restricted, and as we see they are deprived of any authority in the areas of foreign policy, defense and the other key areas of government. The Palestinian police has been created to suppress the Palestinian people and, by extension, protect the lives of the Zionist soldiers from the wrath of revolutionary Muslims.

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The future will of course show whether the Zionists and their regional backers will succeed or the awakened masses of the Palestinians, who cannot in any way be accused of resorting to violence. They merely go on their roof tops and shout Allahu Akbar. They resist the Israeli police and all they possess in terms of weaponry is a piece of stone which has to counter highly sophisticated arms. It seems unlikely that their [the Israelis] new tactic will achieve any success.

[Correspondent] I believe that essentially during the elections in the self-rule establishment — which took place recently — even the most mundane and elementary issues were not observed, including the freedom of taking part in the elections by all those who are eligible. Only those over 30 years of age were allowed to vote, not those under that age. Another example — for instance the refugees were not thought about at all even though there are a great number of refugees abroad. Bearing in mind those issues, how do you see the future for the intifadah?

[Velayati] It is a most strange phenomenon and demonstrates the true nature of today's world and the reality of the international arena and the values which apparently the Western governments resort to — whereas in fact they interpret all those laws and regulations according to their own interests. Nowhere in the world are people under 30 banned from voting. At this moment you see a clear racial prejudice in all of Palestine which has been imposed under the Zionists' bayonets. That is, the people who live in Palestine: there are those who are the true owners, meaning the Palestinians and a bunch of occupiers. The occupiers have their own government where the conditions for the voters and candidates in the Zionist Knesset are that they must definitely be Jewish and have Jewish blood. If someone is an Arab then he is definitely not worthy enough to vote on a par with a Jew. There has never been an uglier image anywhere in the world of racial prejudice, religious prejudice among human beings. The supporters of this occupier and suppressor regime are the self-same ones who believe themselves to be heralds of human freedom and human equality. He who is Jewish, who is of Israelite race, has the right to vote. If someone does not have Israelite blood in his veins he has no right to vote; no right to be chosen or to choose.

In order to keep them happy they have told them to have their own elections — set up a self-rule assembly: a self-rule assembly which is composed only of Arabs and makes decisions limited to the administration of those cities. That is, in fact, the self-rule assembly is just like a city council, not a parliament. That is because neither the government nor the assembly has any authority in the essential governmental issues; all those are in the hands of the Israelis. Any time they wish they will close the gates of that huge prison, which is Gaza, on the people. The inhabitants will not be allowed to enter or leave.

Incidentally, just recently such a thing did happen. That is, the central government announced that because of existing dangers in the days to come — which probably relate to the Jerusalem [Qods; Arabic al-Quds] Day, because every year the Palestinians take part in the Jerusalem Day with particular earnestness and enthusiasm... [changes thought]...they [the Israelis] have made things difficult for the Palestinians without any legitimate reason and closed the roads. After all [there are] those who have to do very lowly jobs in order to subsist. They [the Israelis] are preventing those captive people from doing their daily jobs...

[Correspondent, interrupting] [words indistinct]

[Velayati] What they do cannot be termed employment, it is forced labor. That same forced labor and the subsistence earned is being curtailed. Nowhere in the world, in the industrialized world, in the Western world, is Israel being berated for such anti-human acts. Essentially criticism of Israel in a country like the United States is banned. No one dares to speak ill of the Israeli government. That is, to say something bad about the Israeli government. That is the situation there and that will definitely not last. About 4 million Palestinians are outside the occupied lands in refugee camps. They are deprived of all right: they have no right to return home, their fate in those countries is unclear. Such a situation will definitely not last. [passage omitted on the late Ayatollah Khomeyni initiating Jerusalem Day]

[Correspondent] Every year on Jerusalem Day we witness the Zionist regime imposing limitations on the traffic, closing areas by military means and preventing prayers in the al-Aqsa Mosque. Why has it been important to maintain the ideal of Jerusalem and Palestine, specially in the past several years?

[Velayati] Look! You might remember that several years ago the leadership of the Palestinian struggle were exiled to an area in Southern Lebanon. There these exiled leaders participated in the Jerusalem Day demonstration held on a hill. These people were under pressure, exiled and facing so many difficulties but they did not forget Jerusalem Day. They participated in a demonstration which they had organized on the last day of the holy month of Ramadan. Other people too have participated in this event in other countries; in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. There is this one country, the Islamic Republic of Iran, which will not allow the Palestinian issue to be forgotten. Having a Jerusalem Day at the end of the holy month of Ramadan

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is an opportunity to show to the people of the world that we are committed to the ideal of Palestine and the return of the original owners of the land. As long as this land is occupied by the Zionist occupiers we will continue to support the Palestinian people.

Iran: 'Thousands' Turn Out for al-Quds Day Rallies

LD1602095596 Tehran IRNA in English 0848 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 16, IRNA — Thousands of people turned out today for rallies marking the al-Quds [Jerusalem] international day. The marchers, carrying placards in support of the Palestinian struggle, and shouting slogans for the liberation of Islam's first qibla from the Zionist occupiers, converged on Tehran University from different directions for the Friday prayer. They included people from all walks of life, among them 2,000 students of the Academny of Military Sciences.

The cries of 'Death to Israel' and 'Death to the United States' echoed throughout the path of the rally, which started at 09:00 hours local time (05:30 hours GMT).

A number of Majles representatives were also present in the rallies along with the fasting people of Tehran. Majles representative for Tehran Habibollah Askarowladi told IRNA that he was a regular participant in the rally over the years. He called the al-Quds day rallies as a document of honor for the Islamic Republic of Iran in defending Islam, Muslims and the world's oppressed. He added that the rallies were an inspirational force for the struggle to liberate beit-ul-moqaddas from the clutches of the Zionists.

Talking to IRNA, one of the rally-goers, who identified himself as Mohsen Soroush, said that the objective behind his participation in the rally was to demonstrate support for the liberation of al-Quds and the Palestinian nation. He called on world Muslims to stage such rallies whatever the circumstances in order to generate support for the anti-Zionist struggle.

An eight-year-old girl told IRNA at the rally that she was a supporter of the revolution and the qur'an and that participation in the rally was a form of practical display of her support. She said that she considered it her duty to support children of her age in occupied Palestine who are living under Zionist oppression.

Iran: Deputy Minister on Security Measures During Elections

NC1602105896 Tehran TEHRAN TIMES in English 10 Feb 96 pp 1, 14

[Report by TEHRAN TIMES Service]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran — The Law Enforcement Forces will maintain law and order during elections in four phases and will encounter anybody aiming at disturbing the elections, Gholam Hoseyn Bolandiyan, the Deputy Interior Minister for Security said yesterday.

Speaking to the TEHRAN TIMES in an exclusive interview, he elaborated on the functions of the committee in charge of security law and order during the elections — set up by Interior Ministry — he said, the committee will maintain law and order during elections, evaluate violations, and bring about coordination among various government organs in order to hold fair elections.

On the four phases of elections, he said, they include registration, electioneering campaigns, voting, and declaration of the elected candidates.

Intimidation of public by the candidates, pasting election posters at illegal places, holding unauthorized rallies and disturbing law and order will be strongly dealt with, he added.

According to law, defamation of candidates is not allowed, he said adding, however, the offending candidates will not be arrested until the end of electioneering campaigns.

On the role of army in elections, Bolandiyan said the Law Enforcement Forces will monitor elections and will prevent any violation of rules and regulations.

Some 170,000 personnel of Law Enforcement Forces will maintain law and order in 30,000 election booths.

Iran: New Foreign Ministry Press Department Head Appointed

LD1502173996 Tehran IRNA in English 1136 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 15, IRNA — Iranian Foreign Minister 'Ali Akbar Velayati on Wednesday appointed Mahmud Mohammadi as director general for the ministry's Press and Information Department, reported the English-language daily, IRAN NEWS on Thursday.

Mohammadi, who replaces Naser Heirani Nobari, has served as advisor to the foreign minister, spokesman of the Foreign Ministry and deputy director general for the Foreign Ministry's Press and Information Department.

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Iran: GDP Surpasses 95 Trillion Rials

LD1502135196 Tehran IRNA in English 1324 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 15, IRNA — The value of Iran's gross domestic product (GDP) rose up to rls. 95.134 trillion (dlrs. 54.2 billion on basis of rls. 1,750 for each dollar) in the Iranian calendar year 1372 (ended March 20, 1994) from rls. 66.403 trillion for the preceeding year.

Iran's statistics center in a report published in the book 'Iran's Gross Domestic Product' estimated Iran's GDP through production methods and at current prices for the years 1370-1372.

The book put the value of Iran's gross national product (GNP) at market prices for the year 1372 at rls. 92.649 trillion from rls. 66.336 trillion over the preceeding year.

The value of the national revenues at market prices also rose to rls. 80.791 trillion in the year 1372 from rls. 55.748 trillion in 1371.

The share of the value added of the agriculture sector in the country's GDP dropped by 14.53 percent in 1372 from 16.45 percent in 1371, of the industry by 14.59 percent from 15.66 percent, of the construction by 7.30 percent from 7.45 percent, of the whose-sale and retail, hotel and restaurants by 16.12 percent from 17.15 percent, and of transportation, warehouses and telecommuniction by 6.75 percent from 7.50 percent.

There was also a decrease in the share of value added of the real estates, services and works by 10.44 percent from 11.28 percent, of the management of defence and social insurance by 5.26 percent from 5.99 percent, of education by 3.53 percent from 3.95 percent, of health and social works by 1.70 percent from 1.90 percent and of other public, social and individual services by 1.59 percent from 1.83 percent in Iran's GDP.

However, the share of the value added of the mines sector (including crude oil and other minerals) in Iran's GDP rose by 15.78 percent in 1372 from 8.49 percent in 1371 and that of the financial intermediary by 1.06 percent from 0.98 percent.

The share of the value added of power, gas and water sectors in the country's GDP remained unchanged, standing at 1.35 percent in the years 1371 and 1372.

Iran: 340 Billion Rials Allocated to Powerplant Expansion

LD1502165696 Tehran IRNA in English 1433 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Tehran, Feb. 15, IRNA — The Economy Council in its Wednesday session chaired by President Akbar Hashemi- Rafsanjani earmarked rls. [rials] 340 billion for expansion of Godarlandar powerplant with capacity of 1,000 megawatts.

Participants in the session also approved allocation of over rls. 20 billion for construction of 400 megawatt powerplant beside the Karkhe Dam.

Moreover, they agreed to allot rls. 25 billion in credits to construction and expansion of gymnasiums by the private sector and rls. 16 billion for manufacture of 18 boilers by 'Azarab' company.

Iran: Airports in Kerman Province Detailed

96LA0117A Tehran PARVAZ in Persian 22 Dec 95 -20 Jan 96 pp 22-24

[FBIS Translated Text] **Report**

Note—The development of national airports is one of the activities projected in the First Five-Year Plan of the government. The development of airports, in addition to expanding communication for the people and bringing them closer to other parts of the country, has an important role in the growth of the national economy.

Kerman Province is a province of the country with great potential, to which attention has not been forgotten. In fact, since some time ago, we have witnessed the formation of numerous free zones in this province. With the formation of the free zones in Kerman Province, the necessity of building satellite airports in various cities of the province, particularly its free zones, doubled, and with the continuous efforts regarding Iranian exports, airports were built in most of the important cities of Kerman Province.

This article, which was prepared with the help of Engineer Bahman Khorbak, the general manager of Kerman Province airports, attempts to briefly introduce the airports of Kerman Province.

Kerman Airport

Kerman Airport was put into operation 10 km west of the city of Kerman at an elevation of 16 meters above sea level in 1347 [21 March 1968-20 March 1969] with a runway which is 2,850 meters long and 45 meters wide. It can accommodate up to the Boeing 727 airplanes. The total area of the airport terminal in the early years was 600 square meters. In 1362 [21 March 1983-20 March 1984], the operation for lengthening the runway and enlarging the terminal began, and the terminal was enlarged from 600 square meters to 2,600 square meters for domestic flights and the length of the runway from 2,850 meters to 4,000 meters. At this point, the airport became capable of accommodating wide-bodied airplanes.

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It is noteworthy that in 1356 [21 March 1977-20 March 1978], Kerman Airport, with 2,534 flights, transported 42,500 passengers, while in 1373 [21 March 1994-20 March 1995], with 11,000 flights, it transported 350,152 passengers. This year, with the visit of the honorable speaker of the Majles to Kerman Province, the Kerman International Airport terminal, with 3,000 square meters under construction, was inaugurated, and the total area of the airport terminal increased to 5,600 square meters. The Kerman Airport is at the present a center for Mahan Airlines Company and the Islamic Republic, Caspian, Saha, and Iran Air Tour Airline Companies, carrying out flights from this airport to the cities of Mashhad, Tehran, Esfahan, Zahedan, and Kish.

In 1366 [21 March 1987-20 March 1988], for the first time, Hajj pilgrimage flights began from this airport, and at the present, Hajj pilgrimage flights, flights to Syria, and flights to the newly independent countries depart from Kerman Airport.

With its suitable runway, V.O.R. navigational equipment, and suitable terminals, wide-bodied airplanes up to the Boeing 727 can land and take off from Kerman Airport. Toward the end of the First Plan of the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the construction operations of the satellite airports in the cities of Rafsanjan, Bam, Jiroft, and Sirjan and the installation of V.O.R. navigational equipment in the port were launched and installed by the capable hands of the Iranian specialists of the Electronics Department of the National Airlines Organization.

In 1372 [21 March 1993-20 March 1994], Rafsanjan Airport began its operation with four flights per week to Mashhad and Tehran, and the Sirjan, Bam, and Jiroft Airports were inaugurated last month by the honorable president and the honorable speaker of the Majles.

Rafsanjan Airport

The Rafsanjan Airport, with R5 billion in people's assistance funds, and the Sarcheshmeh Industries on 500 hectares of land, 10 km from the city of Rafsanjan, with a 1,200 square meter terminal and a runway which is 3,250 meters long and 45 meters wide, is ready to accommodate the Bowing 727 and the Tupolov 154, and with the installation of navigational equipment and lighting systems for the runway by the National Airlines Organization, it is capable of handling flights at any hour, night or day. The present flights of Rafsanjan Airport to Mashhad and Tehran are four flights per week. Also, the air boarder of this airport was announced to be open by the honorable Cabinet.

Sirjan Airport

The Sirjan Airport was put into operation in 1368 [21 March 1989-20 March 1990], 10 km from Sirjan on the Sirjan-Babak road, at an elevation of 1,770 meters above sea level, with a runway which is 3,750 meters long and 60 meters wide, with a 45 meter strip and a terminal of 1,200 square meters, with R10 billion from the provincial budget, with the participation of the Golgohar Mines of Sirjan. Also, it has V.O.R. navigational equipment valued at $500,000, which was installed and put into operation this year with the efforts of the hardworking specialists of the National Airlines Organization.

The Sirjan Airport is now ready to admit wide-bodied airplanes up to the Airbus-300.

Jiroft Airport

The Jiroft Airport was constructed in 1370 [21 March 1991-20 March 1992] with R1 billion from provincial funds, on 300 hectares of land 8 km southeast of Jiroft, with plans for a maximum of Boeing 737 airplanes, with a runway which is 2,000 meters long and 30 meters wide and a terminal which is 1,200 square meters. With the installation of navigational equipment at a value of $30,000 by the specialists of the National Airlines Organization, it is ready for the flights of the airline companies. It should be mentioned that the implementor of the Jiroft Airport is the Central Office of Kerman Province Airports.

Bam Airport

The Bam Airport, 10 km east of Bam on the Bam-Zahedan road, on 500 hectares of land, was planned for wide-bodied airplanes in 1370, with R10 billion from the people's assistance funds. At the present, with a flight runway which is 3,425 meters long and 60 meters wide and a 3,100 square meter terminal, it is ready to accept Airbus-300 airplanes.

In the near future, with the installation and operation of its navigational system by the specialists of the National Airlines Organization, it will be put into operation.

Pakistan

Pakistan: MQM Figure Refused Asylum at U.S. Consulate in Karachi

BK1602043596 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in English 0300 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] The former MNA [member of National Assembly] of Altaf Group, Mr. Kanwar Khalid Yunus, an under trial prisoner, made unsuccessful attempt to get political asylum at the U.S. Consulate in

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Karachi by dodging his police guard while returning from a special court for suppression of terrorist activities. The U.S. Consulate authority, instead of granting him asylum, handed him over to Pakistani authorities, bringing an end to the whole drama. The administration has taken disciplinary action against the police guards for their negligence.

Pakistan: Rangers, Indian Forces Exchange Firing on Border

BK1502160296 Islamabad Radio Pakistan Network in Urdu 1500 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Pakistan protested to India over New Delhi's attempt to show the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir as part of India on two occasions, including the Cricket World Cup opening ceremony in Calcutta last Sunday [11 February]. The Indian high commissioner to Pakistan was summoned to the Foreign Office in Islamabad today and was handed a protest note in this regard. [passage omitted]

Answering a question later, a Foreign Office spokesman said that Pakistan is against changing the status of the actual border and the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir. He said that any kind of construction by India there will be tantamount to a violation of the Line of Control.

The spokesman said that although the Indian Border Security Force and the Pakistani Rangers have been trading fire, it is not a firing between the armies of the two countries, and there is no danger of escalation and expansion in the range of this firing.

Pakistan: Altaf Group Member Admits Crimes; 4 'Terrorists' Killed

BK1502144696 Islamabad PTV Television Network in English 1400 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Yurid Shahadat alias Shoaib, a known terrorist of Altaf Group, today confessed that he along with his three other accomplices killed Ehsan Ali Shah, brother of the Sindh chief minister, on the instructions of Altaf Hussain. Speaking at a news conference in Islamabad today, Yurid Shahadat, a resident of Federal B area of Karachi, said that while committing the gruesome act Najmuddin, Arshad Malik, and Samar Zaid were actively involved with him. The Altaf Group terrorist further confessed that he and his accomplices killed 19 people, including six policemen, in different cases of murder during 1994-95. Yurid Shahadat also revealed that Altaf Group had hatched a big plan of terrorism, under which a large number of people would have been killed. Altaf Group has also planned to declare Karachi a separate state after 'Id al-Adha [Muslim festival in April].

Four wanted terrorists of Altaf Group were killed and four policemen were injured in an encounter which took place in Karachi today. According to details, on receiving information, police mobiles encircled the terrorist group which was found active in a sector of New Karachi. During exchange of fire which lasted about one hour, four terrorists, including Aamir Siddiqi, were killed and four policemen sustained injuries. Sindh government had announced a reward of 2 million rupees for the capture of Aamir Siddiqi. A large number of sophisticated weapons, including six hand grenades, one battery rocket, one rocket launcher, three Kalashnikovs, one pistol, and hundreds of bullets were recovered from them. Terrorist Aamir Siddiqi was a member of the Central Committee of Altaf Group and the sector in charge of Landhi.

Pakistan: Afghan Faction Head Meets With Leghari, U.S. Envoy

LD1502204996 (Clandestine) Radio Message of Freedom in Pashto to Afghanistan 0730 GMT 15 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Excerpt] Brother [Golboddin] Hekmatyar, leader of the Hezb-e Eslami [Islamic Party] of Afghanistan, has held separate meetings with the Pakistani President Farooq Ahmad Khan Leghari and the U.S. ambassador to Islamabad.

A correspondent of the Radio Message of Freedom reports from the Pakistan capital that during these meetings brother Hekmatyar discussed the current situation in Afghanistan with the Pakistani president and the U.S. ambassador in Pakistan.

The report says that during the meeting, the U.S. ambassador called on all involved parties in the Afghan conflict to keep open all supply routes to Kabul to alleviate the problems of Kabul residents. He added that a reasonable settlement should be sought to resolve the crisis in the country. [passage omitted]

Pakistan: Developed Nations' Tactics on IPR Issues Viewed

BK1402005996 Karachi BUSINESS RECORDER in English 2 Feb 96 p 2

[Editorial: "Is Another Issue in the Making?"]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] A US embassy official reportedly raised at a panel discussion in Lahore, the issue of alleged violations of Intellectual Property Rights [IPR] in Pakistan, as a result of which, he estimated losses incurred by US companies in respect of video films alone

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at around $60 million annually. In his view, if piracy of books, video cassettes and other property including some textile designs is taken into account, the losses to the US companies would increase to 100s of millions of dollars annually. In this context he reportedly disclosed that Pakistan has been kept under a 'watch list' so that in case instances of violations of IPR kept on increasing resulting in mounting losses to US companies, the US Trade Representatives might recommend imposition of some economic sanctions on Pakistan. This issue, he further reportedly threatened, might lead to diminution of investment interest in Pakistan by private US investors.

It is true that existing laws and rules designed to protect copy rights and other IPR in Pakistan are extremely inadequate some of which are of pre-1940s origin as pointed out by speakers at the panel discussion including Justice Nasira Javaid. At the same time, people in the developing countries including Pakistan are not generally fully aware of the need for the enforcement of laws for the protection of IPR. Moreover, even if the specific laws are there, people suffering as a result of violations of their patents, generally do not pursue their grievances in a court of law. As a result, violations of copy rights and patents are a common feature in not only Pakistan but also in other developing countries. As a result, the production of counterfeits thrives not only for imported products but also for well-known and reusable local products. There is hardly a consumer item that is spared by counterfeiters. The goods range from cosmetic items, pharmaceuticals, battery cells, engineering spare etc., besides the common practice of reproducing foreign pirated books and video cassettes. An official of Millat Tractors Limited participating in the panel discussion reportedly complained about large-scale manufacture of spare parts which were counterfeits of those produced by Millat Tractors Limited, with the result that the company sold hardly 2 percent spare parts although this sale should not be less than 25 percent of tractor sales. This shows that even the genuine and reputable manufacturers locally were unable to ensure protection of their patented products.

After the signing of the Uruguay Round agreement and establishment of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), the issue of international protection of IPR has been elaborately discussed and incorporated in the said agreement. Taking into account genuine difficulties faced by the developing countries, which are struggling to develop new technologies in different fields of industrial activity and other spheres, the WTO has allowed a grace period of 11 years to the least developed countries and 5 years to other developing countries for evolving and framing appropriate laws to ensure protection of IPR. This period is further extendable to same duration in the event genuine difficulties are faced by the developing countries. In the light of such relaxations granted by the WTO to the developing countries any action by the developed countries such as imposition of economic sanctions, will be seen as unilateral which may be contested at the WTO. However, the issue relating to IPR does have the potential to provoke reactions like reservations on the part of foreign investors to come to Pakistan for investment in diversified fields. Additionally, certain non- tariff restrictions may also be imposed on imports from Pakistan on one pretext or the other; A familiar pretext these days is the use of child labour in carpet making. Thus, the weak economies like Pakistan are always open to different types of pressure tactics from the developed nations.

Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka Invited To Join Indian Ocean Rim Initiative

BK1602123896 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Sri Lanka has been invited to join the Indian Ocean Rim [IOR] initiative. The invitation has been sent to President Chandrika Kumaratunga by Mauritius Prime Minister Navin Ramgoolam, chairman intergovernmental meeting on the IOR initiative. This follows discussions Foreign Minister Lakshman Kadirgamar had with a number of leaders of Indian Ocean countries.

A Foreign Ministry release says that the objective of promoting the IOR initiative is to encourage greater trade and investment within the Indian Ocean region and to bring about greater interaction among the people of the area.

Sri Lanka: Top Sea Tiger Leaders Said Killed Aboard Ship

BK1602031496 Colombo DAILY NEWS in English 16 Feb 96

[Received via Internet]

[FBIS Transcribed Text] At least 25 Sea Tigers including six top rungers perished when the Navy and Air Force destroyed the Tiger arms vessel Horizon and its escort boats in an hour long sea battle off Allampil coast early morning Wednesday, official sources said.

Tiger Radio intercepts had confirmed the death of six top Sea Tigers including 'Colonel Madhan' and woman

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Sea Tiger 'Arul', our Trincomalee district correspondent K.D. Jayasekera reported yesterday.

The Navy and Air Force personnel who participated in the sea battle had later spotted several Tiger bodies floating in the sea.

The wrecked vessel which was first seen drifting towards the coast had completely sunk by 9 am on Thursday, reports said.

The Horizon is the LTTE's [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] second North-bound arms vessel to have been destroyed after detection. They lost the first vessel MV [motor vessel] Ahat four years ago when Indian coast guards fired at it. The Tiger crew had allegedly blown up this vessel to prevent it falling intact into the hands of Indian authorities. LTTE's second in command Kittu who accompanied the lethal cargo committed suicide on board.

It is customary for a senior Tiger leader to accompany an arms ship, a military official said.

Investigations are now underway to ascertain the country where the arms vessel originated.

The vessel widely believed to have been one of the fleet owned by the LTTE may have been registered in Panama or Liberia, military sources said. It was fitted with two large guns encased in plywood to prevent detection.

Meanwhile, our sister paper The Observer reported an ongoing massive search for a possible arms cache transferred from a mysterious ship to small boats off the Yala wild life sanctuary coast recently.

Sri Lanka: LTTE Said To Raise Conscription Age

BK1602114196 Colombo Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation International Service in English 1045 GMT 16 Feb 96

[FBIS Transcribed Text] Forty-two Tamil men, women, and children braved the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] on Tuesday and carrying white flags sought the protection of the Sri Lankan Government and the security forces barrier at the checkpoint at Tandikkulam in Vavuniya District.

An official spokesman said that they were being cared for and would be returned to the Jaffna city. They have told the authorities that they were undergoing great hardships under the LTTE in Kilinochchi. The LTTE had forced them out of their homes in Jaffna and evacuated them to Kilinochchi against their will.

Meanwhile, official sources told the national news agency, LANKAPUVATH, that according to intelligence reports the LTTE has raised its age of conscription from (?10) years to 12 years. The report stated that this was due to the fact that Prabhakaran's son Charles Anthony, named after Prabhakaran's best friend who died in battle several years ago, had reached the age of 10. Prabhakaran has been reported to be very found of his children and even finds time each day to play with them for several hours. Intelligence reports say that the LTTE leader has built a playground for Charles Anthony and his sister before the LTTE were ousted from Jaffna by the security forces.

Sri Lanka: LTTE Details Massacre by Troops, Clashes

BK1602113796 (Internet) Tamil Eelam News WWW in Tamil 14 Feb 96

[FBIS Translated Text] Nine children and eight women were reported to be among those killed in the gruesome massacre carried out by Sri Lankan troops at Kumarapuram village in Trincomalee District. A pregnant woman in her advance stage of pregnancy was killed with her infant. The state terrorists stabbed her with a knife and then shot her dead. Frightened by the act of carnage carried out by government troops, ten young women hid in their houses, they were then kidnapped by the above mentioned gang of terrorists.

At the same time, 20 Tamil government employees from Mutur, unaware of this ghastly act of frenzy, went to the locality and were taken into custody by Sri Lankan troops. This group included women. There is still no report on the whereabouts or fate of the civilians taken into custody by Sri Lankan troops. The condition of most of the people admitted to hospital is said to be serious.

The Sri Lankan Government has been disseminating fictitious stories to conceal its acts of genocide. The Sri Lankan Government's report about the discovery of a truck laden with explosives is said to be the same sort of fictitious story. The Sri Lankan Government has been spreading false stories about possible attacks on schools by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam [LTTE], and has now ordered the closure of schools throughout the country until further orders. This order goes into effect tomorrow.

One soldier and four policemen were killed in an ambush by the LTTE on Sri Lankan troops at Sampaltivu in Trincomalee District. This ambush was carried out on the troops who were checking vehicles on a highway around 2000 the day before yesterday.

A checkpost of Sri Lankan troops in Batticaloa was attacked and destroyed by the LTTE at night on 12

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February. The checkpost situated in Oddaimavadi was the one that was destroyed in the attack at about 0020 on 12 February. The damages suffered by the military are not known. A freedom fighter from the LTTE side was martyred in the assault that lasted three minutes.

Six LTTE cadres were martyred in a direct confrontation with the military, which tried to besiege the Tigers in Batticaloa District last Saturday. An LTTE fighter embraced martyrdom in a clash with Sri Lankan troops at Kaludawela in Batticaloa last Friday. Our tributes go to the valiant Tigers who sacrificed their lives for the sake of the freedom of their motherland.

The Sri Lankan Government has requested Sinhalese doctors working abroad to come to treat the soldiers who were wounded in the ongoing war in the north and the east. A report from Sri Lanka says that a team of Sinhalese doctors working in the United States has come to provide treatment to Sinhalese soldiers.

Thanks.

"The thirst of the LTTE is the motherland of Tamil Eelam."

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